the weekly
Standard

APRIL 25, 2005

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FAREWELL TO 'THE PUBLIC INTEREST'
DAVID SKINNER

THE HIGHER LEARNING IN AMERICA

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WARD CHURCHILL

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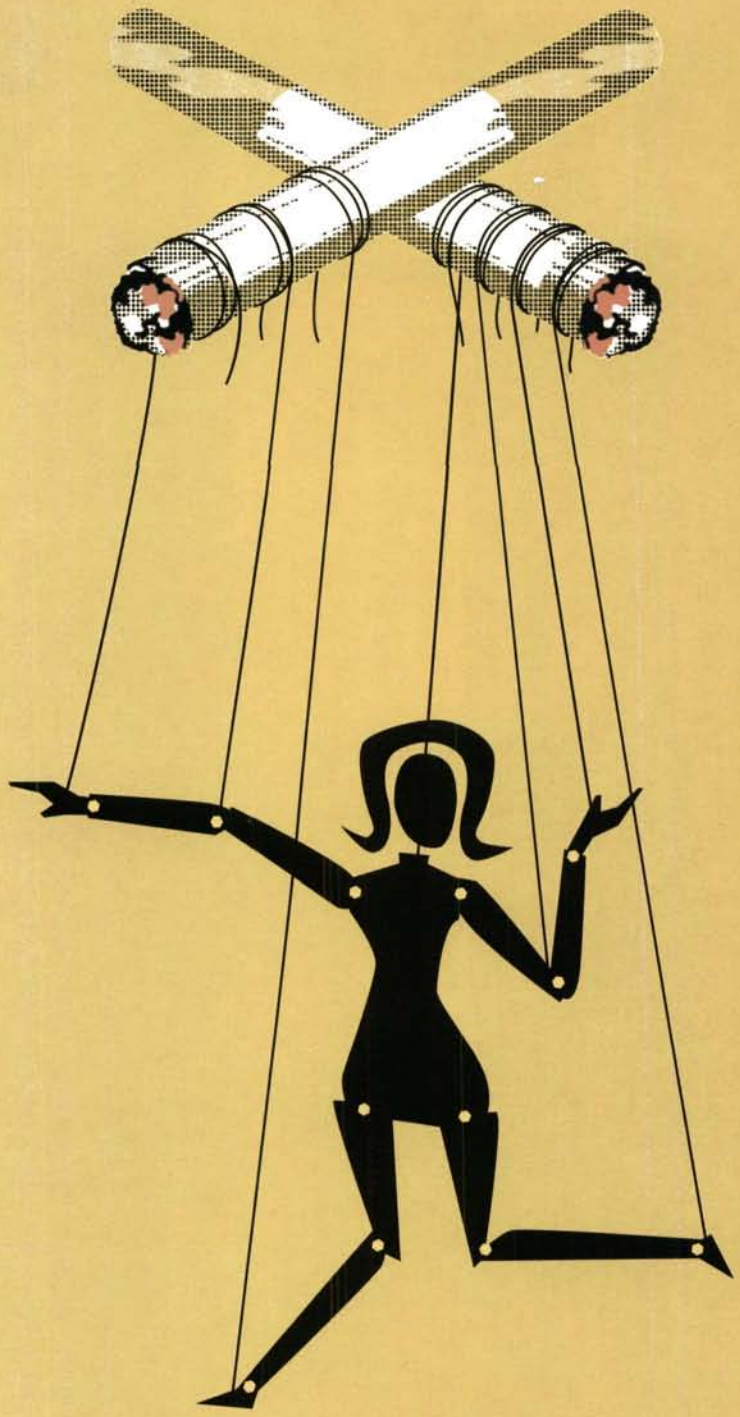

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The West 43rd St. Sausage-Making Plant

In publishing news, the *New York Observer* reports that Basic Books is readying *New York Times* correspondent Alan Feuer's memoir *Over There: From the Bronx to Baghdad: Two Months in the Life of a Reluctant Reporter* for publication in June. An account of the fewer than three weeks Feuer spent in Iraq proper, *Over There* is written in the third person, with a character named T.R. (for "This Reporter") standing in for Feuer.

If the excerpts are any indication, the book looks likely to shed new light on how the *Times*'s Baghdad bureau functioned—or, more precisely, dysfunctioned. In this excerpt, T.R. turns his notes into a dispatch from the war zone:

> There was a name in the pad, Haidar something, A-R-something, Aruban or Arubay, it was impossible to tell. He bore down on the notebook and tried to sort it out. Aruban or Arubay—what difference did it make? All right, Mr. Arubay, speak some words to the readers of the *Times*.

"Haidar Arubay" indeed showed up in the *Times* on April 14, 2003.

In another passage, Feuer/T.R. observes colleague Ian Fisher (not a pseudonym) write the paper's lead Iraq story of the day. Fisher scanned

> the Internet for wire reports, listened as [Feuer] toted up his own experiences, borrowed bits from [*Times* reporter John] Kifner, stole a pinch from Reuters, staged a raid on AFP [Agence France Presse], then cobbled everything together. . . . The premiere story in the next day's *Times* was being fashioned out of wire reports and late-night recollections from exhausted correspondents.

"In the book itself, Feuer acknowledges that he has taken liberties with his reminiscences," *Times* spokeswoman Catherine Mathis wrote the *Observer*'s Tom Scocca in an email. "We very much believe that is the case." Maybe so. But whether or not Feuer is lying about lying in the pages of the *Times*, or Mathis is lying about Feuer's lying about lying (we think we're keeping this straight), you can be sure THE SCRAPBOOK will buy a copy of the book when (and if) it's finally released and report its own findings.

Until then, we'll have to content ourselves with yet another brewing scandal in the *Times*'s Baghdad bureau. This one turned up in the gossip pages of the *New York Daily News* on April 7. Turns out that former Baghdad bureau chief Susan Sachs—she held the job for just under five months in 2003 and 2004—in order to have revenge on star *Times* war correspondents Dexter Filkins and John F. Burns (with whom she reportedly clashed often while in Baghdad), allegedly sent emails and postmarked letters to her colleagues' wives informing them that their husbands were having affairs in Iraq.

No one knows, or wants to know, how the *Times* reporters spent their downtime in Iraq, but we do know that Sachs was fired from the *Times* shortly after the *Daily News* item appeared. For her part, Sachs says she didn't send the emails, and that a polygraph shows she's telling the truth. For its part, the *Times* isn't answering any questions. Which is too bad. Because we want to know: Where do you find these people? ♦

Kicking John Bolton

The Senate Committee on Foreign Relations last week opened its confirmation hearings on President Bush's nominee for ambassador to the United Nations, John Bolton. The committee's Democrats were loaded for bear. Reading between the lines, we suspect they disagree with Bolton's profound skepticism about the record of the United Nations. (A well-earned skepticism, by the way: Bolton's thankless task in the Bush I administration was getting the U.N. to repeal its morally grotesque "Zionism-is-racism" resolution.)

Many of Bolton's Democratic inquisitors, for instance, seem to labor under the delusion that it is the ambassador's duty to have a high opinion of the United Nations, as if he were the U.N.'s ambassador to the United States and not the other way around. Here was Barbara Boxer, the Cicero of Marin County: "You have nothing but disdain for the U.N. You can dance around it. You can run away from it. You can put perfume on it. . . ."

That was, however, among the more substantive comments. After an adversary of Bolton's from the State Department described him as a "kiss-up, kick-down sort of guy" who was rude, or worse, to subordinates, the deliberations took a farcical turn, as senators began discussing workplace etiquette in Washington.

Here is Delaware's Joe Biden, the ranking Democrat: When a government official confronts a subordinate "and reams him a new one," that's "just not acceptable." Biden further vented: "You have a habit of belittling your opposition, and even some of your friends." Chimed in Boxer: "I think Mr. Bolton needs anger management."

THE SCRAPBOOK cannot improve upon the reaction of a blogger buddy of

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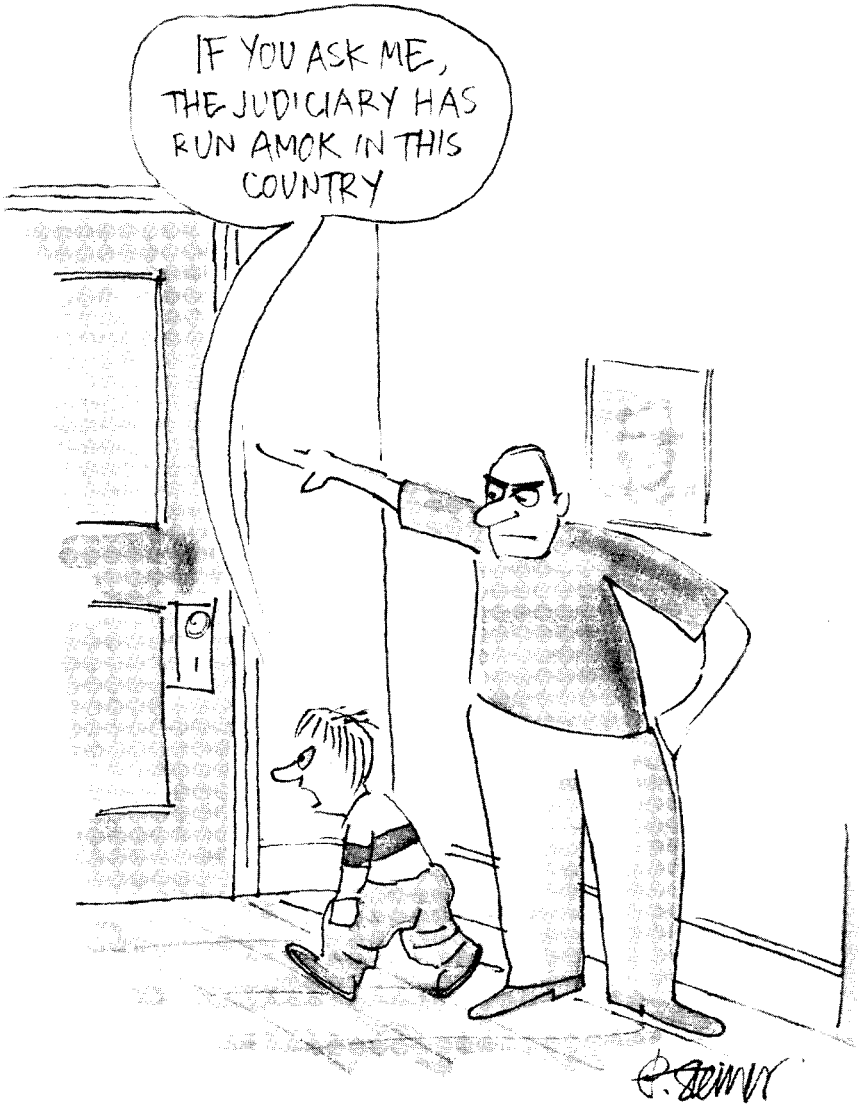

ours at *TheAmericanScene.com*, Reihan "Rapmaster" Salam, who asked:

> What if the lower-level official badly needed "a new one"? Is the senior official not obliged to ream him one? Recall that Joe Biden is one of the tough-talking "national security Democrats." If he's unwilling to "ream" low-level officials "a new one," how does he plan on dealing with the Outposts of Tyranny (OoT), let alone the Axis of Evil (AoE)? Far be it from me to endorse bullying, but I dare say that there comes a time in a bureaucracy's life when "new ones" must be "reamed."

What THE SCRAPBOOK wonders is how many of Biden's colleagues on the committee meet his definition of acceptability for office. We'd like to hear from you, Hill rats especially, any firsthand (or second- and third-hand) accounts of Senate Foreign Relations Committee Democrats who have a history of "kicking down" or otherwise maltreating subordinates.

We intend to conduct this little investigation according to the same high evidentiary standards adhered to by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee minority staff—i.e., feel free to email any dirt you have on Biden, Boxer, Dodd, Kerry et al. anonymously or otherwise to *scrapbook@weeklystandard.com*. ♦

John Paul the Great, cont.

Richard John Neuhaus of *First Things* is publishing a lively and well-informed diary from Rome during the papal succession. A sample:

> Raymond Arroyo and I had Fr. Peter Gumpel on our EWTN broadcast last night. We thought that would make for an interesting ten-minute segment—but it turned into an utterly fascinating half hour.
>
> Gumpel is from an aristocratic Austrian family and has had personal encounters with popes going back to Pius XI. A "relator" (an independent judge) in the office dealing with the causes of saints, the Jesuit Gumpel has been working in Rome for more than 50 years. While he believes that John Paul II will be and should be declared a saint, he is strongly opposed to rushing the process. The procedures established in the 16th century—including the rigorous examination of alleged miracles by the best medical science of the times—are essential, he insists, to avoid the awkwardness of the subsequent discovery of possibly embarrassing facts. He is also cool to the idea of declaring the late pope "John Paul the Great," although there is no official procedure for applying that title. "Does it mean that other popes were not so great?" he asks. To which I counter, "Does declaring him a saint mean that other popes were not so saintly?" We agree to disagree on the appellation "John Paul the Great."

Neuhaus's diary is being made available to subscribers and non-subscribers alike at his journal's website: (*www.firstthings.com/romediary/romediary.htm*) ♦

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Casual

Orchidacious

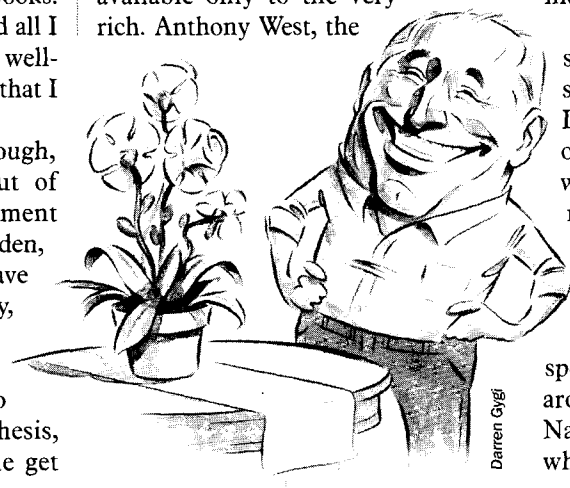
Orchids look to become my next obsession. I do not, I think, qualify as a truly obsessive personality, but I do like to have an obsession going from time to time. For a while I was obsessed with finding the perfect fountain pen, which I believe I've now found. Books were a more enduring obsession, lasting decades: I wanted to own and read all the good books. That, too, is well behind me, and all I care about now is having a few well-written books around the house that I haven't yet read.

As an obsession, orchids, though, are very different, coming out of nowhere. A city man, an apartment dweller, I have never kept a garden, nor do I desire to do so now. I have never taken a course in botany, and the pistil and the stamen exhaust my knowledge on the subject. If a grandchild were to ask me to explain photosynthesis, "Kid," I'd have to say, "lemme get back to you on this one."

My interest in orchids began roughly a year or so ago, when a friend, in commemoration of his wife's death, sent my wife and me and a few other of his friends a grand double-orchid plant, species Phalaenopsis, whose large but delicate white flowers, sitting in the middle of our dining-room table, lasted nearly four months. Looking at them refreshed my spirit; and when they finally withered, I felt a genuine subtraction.

Not long after, at our local farmers' market, an orchid grower set up a stand. I began buying orchids from him, at $25 for a six-inch pot, usually keeping three or four such pots in the apartment. When the farmers' market closed in the autumn, I discovered that Home Depot, in its gardening department, carries a good supply of orchids, and I now buy them there ($20 for a six-inch pot). Standing in the checkout line, holding my single potted orchid, behind two guys with eighty-pound sacks of concrete, and in front of a guy with a heavy cart filled with insulation, I feel like Oscar Wilde, freshly arrived in America, posing with a long lily in his hand.

I mention prices because orchids were once thought to be a luxury available only to the very rich. Anthony West, the natural son of H.G. Wells and Rebecca West, and a man with a keen interest in orchids, reports that in the 1880s and '90s, keeping and growing orchids was the sport of the very rich in England: "The mark of arrival, beyond having a town house and country place, a shoot in Scotland, or a string of race horses, was having an orchid house—and having in it something from the heart of Brazil, or darkest New Guinea, or upper Burma, that they hadn't got at Chatsworth, or in the Rothschilds' orchid house at Tring Park." This is but another instance of how those of us who are mere members of the schleppoisie can now enjoy pleasures once available only to the very rich.



The actor Raymond Burr is said to have been mad about orchids, and so is the historian John Hope Franklin, who grows them. Rex Stout's detective Nero Wolfe was another orchidizer, and for him the more exotic the species the better. Hercule Poirot used sometimes to wear a small orchid of subtle color in the lapel of his exquisitely tailored suits.

Part of the attraction of orchids is their color. When it comes to orchids, my vocabulary isn't subtle enough to register the astonishing range of their colors. I have a plant now with no fewer than eleven blooms and three more in bud, all in what I call a washed yellow, turning to lightest green, faintly pink in the middle, with extraordinary brown markings that, close up, resemble Chinese hieroglyphs.

The exoticism of these flowers supplies another part of their pleasure for me. With them in my house I feel I have a butterfly collection, on loan for as long as they live, which is usually roughly three months. But it is a butterfly collection not pinned to velvet but instead shown in perfect stop-action, or, if you prefer, *tableau vivant*. There are some 30,000 species of orchid that grow wild around the world, and, if Vladimir Nabokov were alive, he could tell me whether there are more or fewer species of butterfly. After he did, I would tell him that the nice thing about the orchids is that at least one doesn't have to run around in shorts with a net to capture them.

We couldn't keep flowers in our apartment until the decease of our highly civilized cat, Isabelle, whose only flaw was to treat all flowers as her personal salad bar. I don't plan ever to grow orchids—mine is an obsession with clear limits—but I do like to acquire them with as many buds as possible, allowing myself to believe that my careful watering—three ice cubes in their terra cotta pots every other morning—is what causes them to bloom and flourish. So please, in the future, do not send small plaques, tall trophies, or jeroboams of champagne. Orchids will do splendidly.

Joseph Epstein

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PRAs are A-Okay

In "Losing the Social Security Battle" (April 18), Stephen Moore wrote, "Senate Republicans are now crafting a compromise proposal that takes personal accounts off the table."

It is absurd to think that after having worked tirelessly to educate the public about the need for Social Security reform and the benefit of voluntary Personal Retirement Accounts, Republicans would take PRAs out of the solution to fix Social Security for future generations.

Indeed, Republicans have been working hard to get Democrats to the table—reaching out to their colleagues on the other side of the aisle to find a solution to save and strengthen Social Security. However, Moore's article was factually incorrect in stating that Republicans have taken voluntary PRAs off the table. All ideas remain on the table, and PRAs continue to be the centerpiece of Republicans' plan to save and strengthen Social Security.

Now is not the time to criticize Republicans for trying to negotiate a deal with Democrats or to say that their plan is "floundering." Republicans remain committed to incorporating PRAs into the Social Security program now so that they have the time needed to grow and help sustain the overall program.

PRAs provide individuals—not the government—with control and ownership. They give individuals flexibility with their retirement savings, rather than a fixed income check from Washington, D.C. And they hold the promise of a greater return for future generations than what they are promised by today's Social Security system.

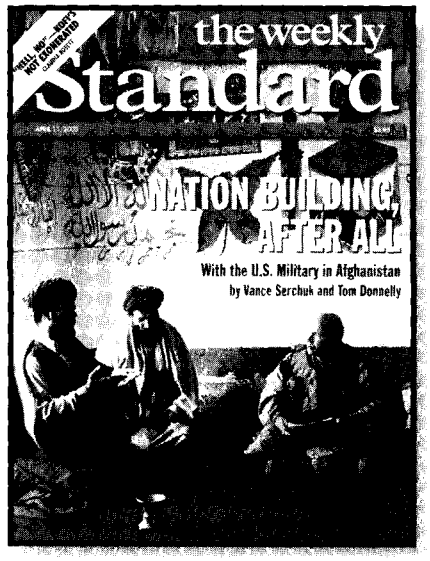
As the dialogue continues, Republicans remain committed to implementing PRAs into Social Security, engaging Democrats, and looking at all solutions that allow Social Security to remain a program on which our children and grandchildren can depend.

Sen. Rick Santorum
Washington, DC

A Lightning Bolton

Regarding Stephen F. Hayes's "'I Don't Do Carrots'" (March 21): I assume that the hesitation to support John Bolton's nomination as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations has been based on concern over the nominee's reputation for tough talk, and for his oft-repeated criticism of the U.N. and other international organizations. There may have been a time when such concerns had merit, but that time is not now.

I have known and worked with John Bolton for more than a decade. He has a remarkable ability to analyze the most complicated foreign policy problems, and an equally remarkable ability to express himself. I did not always agree with his policy recommendations, but even on those rare occasions it was a close call.



That John often publicly debates issues "with the bark off" is true and is at the heart of much of the opposition to his nomination.

Yet given what we all know about the sorry state of the U.N., it is time that we were represented in that body by someone with enough guts to demand reform—and to see that whatever changes result are more than window dressing.

It is clear that the future of the U.N.—and of America's role within that organization—is in question. Who better to demonstrate to the member states that the United States is serious about reform? Who better to speak for all Americans, including Senate Democrats and Republicans, who are dedicated to a healthy U.N. that will fulfill the dreams of its founders?

Ambassador Bolton will be an articulate and effective critic. He will not be irresponsible in his pursuit of reform because he is smart enough to know how counterproductive that would be.

But neither will Bolton seek compromise with those who profit from—and seek to preserve—the status quo *ad infinitum*.

Lawrence S. Eagleburger
Charlottesville, VA

Tunisian Pluralism

Reuel Marc Gerecht's "What Hath Ju-Ju Wrought!" (March 14) unfortunately includes a number of inaccuracies regarding Tunisia.

Gerecht ignores, for instance, the fact that democratic pluralism is a reality in Tunisia, based on the reforms initiated by President Zine el Abidine ben Ali since 1987.

The last two presidential elections were in fact pluralistic and the incumbent was challenged by other contenders for the office of president. Six political parties are today represented in parliament and a total of eight political parties are active in the country.

Political parties, including those of the opposition, are represented in local, regional, and national councils. They are also entitled to public funds to finance their campaigns and various activities including the publication of their own newspapers. Whether in parliament, in various public forums, or in the media, there is a vibrant political debate in Tunisia.

Gerecht did not have to borrow a page from any other book to understand the reason why Tunisia has invited Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon to attend the World Summit on the Information Society, scheduled to take place in Tunisia next November. All world leaders, including Prime Minister Sharon, were invited by Tunisian president Zine el Abidine ben Ali to attend this United Nations event.

Tunisia has unwaveringly supported peace efforts in the Middle East and

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reform in the Arab world. For many years already, it has taken a principled stand against all forms of extremism and terrorism.

Its relationship with the United States is based on a 200-year-old tradition of friendship and cooperation and a common commitment to the values of moderation and liberty.

TAOUFIK CHEBBI
Embassy of Tunisia
Washington, DC

SECOND COMING

KATHERINE MANGU-WARD has done a great service in exposing the myths of Jim Wallis ("God's Democrat," April 11), the most preposterous of which is that his politics are neither left nor right, but biblical. While Mangu-Ward's analysis of the "young Jim" and "old Jim" is on target, I have good reason to believe she misses the mark in concluding that the "old Jim" hasn't been successful in attracting followers.

In late 1971, I was an undergraduate at a prominent evangelical Christian college and helped to organize a campus visit by Jim and his *Post-American* buddies (they were all guys). At the time, many of my friends and I were enamored by Jim's "radical" Christianity and found it a welcome alternative to the suffocating politics of so much of what was still then called Christian fundamentalism. Over the years my political worldview changed while Jim's clearly hasn't.

After his initial impact among my college generation in the early 1970s, Jim's star sunk in the 1980s and 1990s—only to rise again in the past several years. As a professor at an evangelical Christian college today, I have watched in amusement as a new generation of evangelical college students has rediscovered Jim Wallis.

Recently, however, my amusement has given way to alarm, as it has become clear that Wallis and his agenda are no passing intellectual fad. The sad reality is that anti-Western, anti-American, anti-capitalist, and anti-Israeli biases infuse the academic culture of many evangelical Christian college campuses.

Fueled by a professoriate that embraces the same leftist agenda as that of their colleagues in the secular academy, these Christian professors are making great strides in reorienting the political leanings of the coming generation of evangelical leaders. The resurrection of the evangelical left is real, and its influence is growing.

And make no mistake about it: The second coming of Jim Wallis has played an important role in all this.

DEAN C. CURRY
Grantham, PA

BERGER'S WHOPPER

REGARDING SANDY BERGER'S light sentence for his theft and destruction of government documents at the National Archives (SCRAPBOOK, April 11): There is the distinct smell of a cover-up here.

I do research for the U.S. government at the National Archives, and have for almost 15 years. There are very clear rules of behavior when it comes to handling archival documents, all of which are government property.

Theft and destruction of such documents are felonies and should have resulted in a minimum of over one year in jail and a hefty fine for Berger, no matter who he is or was. To reduce it essentially to a misdemeanor, especially the "destruction" aspect of the affair, does serious damage to the public's respect for the authority of the National Archives and its contents.

Now any fool will steal documents and destroy them and—using the "Berger Ploy"—receive the same light sentence that Berger got. Before Berger's disgraceful conduct, if you or I had done what he did, we would have been singing the "Jail House Blues."

This whole affair stinks. The congressional committee that oversees the National Archives should look into what kind of lousy deal was struck, by whom, and why. Then let the firings begin.

MAX FRIEDMAN
Arlington, VA

ZERO TOLERANCE

OLIVIER GUITTA'S article on the Saudi Arabian education system ("A Nation at Risk," April 4) was excellent. However, the 2003 study of Saudi schoolbooks that Guitta cited was a joint project of the American Jewish Committee and the Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace.

Guitta only mentioned CMIP. The full study is available on AJC's website (*www.ajc.org*).

KENNETH BANDLER
American Jewish Committee
Washington, DC

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the weekly Standard

The Fairness Option

The Senate majority leader, Bill Frist, and his Republican colleagues, face a momentous decision: Do they allow the Democratic minority to prevent the Senate from voting on judicial nominees, or do they invoke the "nuclear option"—that is, change the rules so a simple majority of 51 can force a vote?

For the past few months, Frist has been applying public pressure: first, by routinely complaining about the Democratic filibuster against President Bush's nominees for the federal appellate bench; and second, by suggesting that "all options are on the table." Frist's threats have not impressed Democrats, who see no benefit in curtailing their obstructionist tactics. From their point of view, talking nominees to death keeps conservatives out of the federal judiciary, and weakens the Bush administration. And Democrats argue that changing Senate rules would injure the spirit of harmony on Capitol Hill.

Excuse us for a moment while we gag over that one. Simply stated, it is the Democrats who have violated the standards of behavior in this episode. They have maligned distinguished, well-qualified judges with whom they disagree as "radical" and "outside the mainstream" of judicial thought when it is, in fact, the Democrats who hover at the fringes of extremism. Senate minority leader Harry Reid has a soft voice and professorial manner, but he is an accomplished name-caller (Alan Greenspan is "one of the biggest political hacks we have in Washington") and seldom hesitates to misrepresent the views of judicial nominees. It's impossible to reconcile the ideal of comity with summarily denying nominees the courtesy of an up-or-down vote on the Senate floor.

That is why Frist needs to concentrate his energies, organize the majority, and face down the challenge posed by Harry Reid and his troops. But let's call this "nuclear option" by its proper name: the fairness option. Senate Democrats are the ones who have, in effect, gone nuclear—requiring a supermajority of 60 senators to approve judges. Listening to Democrats, and reading editorial commentary, Mr. and Mrs. America might have gained the impression that the three-fifths Senate vote required to end debate was dictated by James Madison on his deathbed. Hardly. Cloture is a Senate rule, not a constitutional requirement. It was President Woodrow Wilson, frustrated by the Senate's indulgence of endless talk, who promoted the adoption of Rule XXII, mandating a two-thirds vote for cloture. Sixty years later, Senate Democrats, led by Robert Byrd, reduced the two-thirds requirement to three-fifths. The sacred principle of requiring 60 votes to end a filibuster is neither an ideal of the Founders nor a historic precedent: It is a procedural rule less than 30 years old. And, in the long history of the United States, filibusters have never been used by a minority systematically to block a president's judicial nominees.

It is true that the filibuster preserves one option for the minority against the rule of the majority party, and may allow a minority to focus the attention of the country on momentous issues before the Senate acts. But it is also worth noting that this procedure has not always been used for constructive purposes. In recent times, the filibuster was used most promiscuously to frustrate civil-rights legislation: In 1957 Strom Thurmond held the floor for 24 hours for that purpose—a record which still stands—and in 1964, 18 Democrats and one Republican blocked the Civil Rights Act for two-and-a-half months.

That's the history. The politics is even more compelling. No Senate Republican should misunderstand the Democrats' motive in blocking the nominations of, among others, Justice Janice Brown of the California Supreme Court, Judge Henry Saad of the Michigan Court of Appeals, or Texas Supreme Court Justice Priscilla Owen: It is power, pure and simple. These, and other jurists, have been nominated by President Bush, favorably evaluated by the American Bar Association, have testified before and been endorsed by the Judiciary Committee, and await final judgment in the Senate. If the Democrats manage to prevent a vote for the sake of political obstruction, they will set a precedent more momentous than a change in Senate rules.

The power of any president, Democrat or Republican, to appoint judges would then depend not on a formal vote of the Senate, but on the consent of 40 partisans determined to inflict maximum political damage. So the stakes for the Bush administration could not be clearer: If Harry Reid and the Democrats can abuse Senate rules to stop their colleagues from voting on appellate nominees, Supreme Court appointments will be next on the list. And which is more important: the right of any president to appoint federal judges, and the right of nominees to a Senate vote; or some spurious notion of "comity" on Capitol Hill?

—Philip Terzian, for the Editors

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Tom DeLay, Red Statesman

Why his enemies are desperate to bring him down.

BY JEFFREY BELL

TWO THINGS happened last week that cast a sharp light on the real impetus behind the Democratic/media effort to bring down House majority leader Tom DeLay. The first was House approval, by a huge margin of 110 votes on final passage, of the permanent repeal of the federal inheritance tax. The second was DeLay's apology for having predicted negative consequences for judges such as those in the Terri Schiavo case who go out of their way to ignore the wishes of the other two branches of government.

The scheduling of the tax vote was not DeLay's decision alone. The default position of House Republicans is that you schedule your high-profile tax-cut votes in the week leading up to April 15. But sticking to that plan completely ignored the conventional 2005 wisdom of Washington elites (including many Senate Republicans) that in the face of big deficits, reduction or elimination of an important tax is at the very least far less appealing than in earlier years.

Evidently, when faced with a vote, most House members—all but one Republican (Jim Leach of Iowa) and dozens of Democrats—could not bring themselves to act on this supposedly self-evident insight. House support for final repeal of the inheritance tax reached its high-water mark in this, the fourth straight year the House endorsed it. If DeLay were out of the picture, it is hard to imagine the vote happening at all. Certainly no high officials in either the Senate or White House advocated such a vote, or even moved to follow suit once the huge bipartisan House margin suggested the likelihood that the repeal measure has retained all of its earlier political potency.

As to DeLay's apology for supposedly threatening America's judges, it wasn't nearly as abject as his critics desired. And he continues to advocate a House investigation of judicial supremacy and its many practitioners. What's interesting is not the extent to which DeLay climbed down, but the kind of man he is to show such indignation toward judicial conduct in the Schiavo case in the first place.

Most elected officials show indignation only in the wake of compelling poll data. At the time DeLay spoke out, and since, all the polling on the Schiavo case cut strongly against his stand. The kind of person who would be indignant in the face of near unanimity among the judges, the editorial writers, and the pollsters is apt to be someone who himself is deeply pro-life and socially conservative, not someone out to score political points or "stroke the base."

Moreover, as a pure analytic matter, DeLay's complaint about the inability of the legislative and executive branches to bring the judicial branch to any kind of account is among the most unassailable things he could have said. Yet we had the spectacle, for days on end, of the White House and the Republican Senate leadership hastening to explain how much they admire the independence of the judicial branch.

President Bush did not seem so admiring in his final (and best) debate with John Kerry last fall, when he explained his endorsement of the Federal Marriage Amendment as an effort to keep the nation's judicial elites from taking the decision on how to define marriage out of the hands of the American people. And if Bill Frist is so satisfied with the present state of the judiciary, how can he attach such importance to breaking the Democratic filibuster on the president's judicial nominees?

The truth is that Tom DeLay is a special target because he is the first legislative power broker to be an authentic Red State conservative. He is an unhyphenated Reaganite: militantly pro-life and pro-values on social issues, a pro-growth tax cutter on economic issues, and an unapologetic, spread-American-values interventionist abroad. In the years since the GOP's congressional realignment victory of 1994, no other GOP leader in either the House or Senate fully fits this description.

Certainly not Newt Gingrich, whose Contract With America was designed to play down abortion and other social issues. Nor was DeLay part of Gingrich's inner group. In Gingrich's most pivotal internal House victory, his campaign in 1989 to succeed Dick Cheney as minority whip, DeLay was chief vote counter for Gingrich's opponent, Ed Madigan of Illinois. When DeLay was elected majority whip in 1995, it was at the expense of a close Gingrich ally, Robert Walker of Pennsylvania.

DeLay joined others much closer to Gingrich in the abortive effort to oust Gingrich in 1997, but unlike most of the others was able to maintain his standing in the House. Even so, he would have remained a cog in the machine (albeit an important one) had not both Gingrich and his chosen successor, Bob Livingston, resigned within weeks of each other a year later. That made possible the sudden elevation to speaker of a little-known DeLay deputy whip, Rep.

Jeffrey Bell is a principal of Capital City Partners, a Washington consulting firm.

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It's Time to Act on High School Reform

KURT M. LANDGRAF,
PRESIDENT & CEO, ETS

"The imperative for action is urgent."

The quote comes from Achieve, a bipartisan group created by governors and business leaders to support reform of America's public high schools. The insight couldn't be more timely, or more worth heeding.

By now, it's widely recognized that our high schools are, as Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates says, "obsolete." In recent weeks, a consensus has also emerged that now is the time to act. Those of us who are passionate about education reform have begun to do just that.

The National Governors Association's recent education summit, for instance, saw a number of excellent reform proposals, including Gates' call for an emphasis on "the 3 R's": *rigorous* curriculum, made *relevant* by excellent teachers, in a setting in which personal *relationships* create a welcoming learning environment.

The governors' summit also produced a five-point "Action Agenda" that can serve as a model for school systems throughout the country:

1. **Restore value to the high school diploma** by raising standards for *all* students, and tying graduation tests and requirements to the expectations of colleges and employers

2. **Redesign high schools** to provide students with the high-level knowledge and skills they need and the educational options and support that are crucial to academic success

3. **Give students the excellent teachers and principals they need** by improving teachers' and principals' knowledge and skills, and providing incentives for teachers to go — and stay — where they're needed most

4. **Set goals, measure progress, and hold high schools and colleges accountable** to benchmarks, and provide timely, effective intervention in low-performing schools

5. **Streamline and improve education governance** so that elementary, secondary and postsecondary schools work more collaboratively

Collaboration between secondary and postsecondary schools is key. It will be the theme of ETS's own "College Readiness/College Success Summit" next month, which will bring together some of the leading groups involved in helping to ensure high school students are prepared for postsecondary success.

Now that high school reform is on the public policy agenda, we have an opportunity to make improvements that will last for generations — if we seize the moment.

At ETS, we're doing our part. We're listening to educators, parents and policymakers. We're learning from sound research. And we're leading the effort to achieve both informed public policy and informed educational practice.

Listening. Learning. Leading.

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Denny Hastert, and the Red State era of the House truly began in 1999.

Since the 2000 election and the accompanying Red State/Blue State polarization, Red State conservatives have grown in strength in tandem with the alternative Red State media: talk and Christian radio, conservative bloggers, Fox News, and all the rest who have put older, Blue State media on notice that they are no longer capable of unilaterally defining the national debate.

DeLay is the most important of a small but growing group of conservative leaders who are willing and able to operate without permission or praise from Blue State media. The fact that Hastert, DeLay, and their allies have maintained unbroken operational control of the House, never losing a significant floor vote in the four-plus years since Bush became president, has (to put it mildly) opened the door for other ambitious leaders to consider doing the same, either on selected issues or across the board.

If DeLay goes down because of overseas trips and/or fundraising practices that have never caused the slightest political problem for anyone else, the lesson to other Red State leaders will be clear. The four-year House winning streak, so widely taken for granted among conservatives, will not long survive DeLay. That is why Democrats and Blue State media (despite some half-hearted efforts to depict DeLay as a GOP albatross) so fervently desire his career to end as soon as possible.

As he begins his effort to force the Senate to permit a majority to approve new conservative judges—inevitably to culminate in a Supreme Court nomination fight—Bill Frist will soon have to choose whether, like DeLay, to operate on the Red State side of the divide, expecting and getting no praise from older Blue State media. If Frist does so successfully, he is in the game to succeed President Bush as the Red State candidate. If he fails or turns aside, the Blue State media will dislike him less, but his presidential hopes will almost certainly be history. ♦

Mission to Moscow

Who picked up the tab for the majority leader?

BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

On April 7 the Campaign for America's Future, a liberal group, bought a full-page ad in the conservative *Washington Times*. The ad displays photos of Ronald Reagan, Barry Goldwater, Dwight Eisenhower, and Tom DeLay. "Once upon a time," the ad begins, "conservatives stood for honest government. . . . Now, their chosen leader"—that would be DeLay, the House majority leader—"is the symbol of money and corruption in Washington."

The ad appeared the day after both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* recycled moldy charges against DeLay in front-page stories. It was all part of an ongoing effort to discredit the Texas Republican, who has been admonished by the House Ethics committee more times than any other member of Congress but whose main offense seems to have been success: boosting the power of his party, passing legislation Democrats don't like, and raising large amounts of money.

Some of that money goes to his family. The *New York Times* story—"Political Groups Paid Two Relatives of House Leader"—reported that DeLay's wife and daughter have been paid more than $500,000 as employees of his political action committees since 2001. But, as DeLay's staff was quick to observe, employing your husband, wife, son, or daughter and paying them with campaign funds violates no law or congressional ethics rule—and, according to the *Los Angeles Times*, at least 39 members of Congress do it, from both parties.

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Meanwhile the April 6 *Washington Post* story highlighted an August 1997 "fact-finding" mission DeLay, his wife, and top staff took to Moscow. According to forms DeLay's staff filed with the House travel office, the trip was paid for by the National Center for Public Policy Research, a conservative nonprofit on Capitol Hill. The trip lasted six days and cost about $60,000. The *Post* story distilled and strengthened reporting from the March 18 edition of *National Journal*'s *CongressDaily*. *CongressDaily*'s article cited "two sources familiar with travel planning," and began: "An August 1997 trip to Moscow by then-House Majority Whip DeLay and four congressional staffers was funded largely by a Russian energy firm or a key affiliate which was a client of former lobbyist Jack Abramoff."

Abramoff, as all Washington insiders know, is under investigation by the Justice Department, the Interior Department, the IRS, the FBI, a special interagency task force, and the Senate Finance and Indian Affairs committees, among others, for allegedly defrauding Indian gaming interests of somewhere between $66 and $88 million (see Andrew Ferguson's "A Lobbyist's Progress," THE WEEKLY STANDARD, Dec. 20, 2004). Until recently Abramoff sat on the board of the National Center for Public Policy Research. In 1997, when the Center bankrolled Delay's trip to Russia, he was employed as a lobbyist at the firm Preston Gates Ellis & Rouvelas Meeds LLP. House rules forbid members from having travel bills paid for by lobbyists.

Sometime in early 1997 Abramoff

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registered as a lobbyist for Chelsea Commercial Enterprises Ltd. Chelsea was incorporated—here the documentary record is contradictory—either in the Bahamas or in Jersey, an island in the English Channel that is known for its lax financial disclosure laws. In his registration, Abramoff specified that Chelsea was paying him to build "support for policies of the Russian government for progressive market reforms and trade with the United States." To that end he was paid $260,000 in 1997 and, according to the *Post*, "less than $10,000 in 1998." Chelsea also paid a New York law firm, Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP, $180,000 in '97 and about $30,000 between '98 and 2001 to work on its behalf.

"Another source" handed the *Post* reporters a memo taken from Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft, dated May 6, 1997. In the memo, Ellen S. Levinson, then a lobbyist for Chelsea at Cadwalader, outlines a year-long schedule of junkets to Russia. The six junkets mentioned in Levinson's memo, the *Post* reported, included a trip for an "advance team" in May 1997, a visit by journalists and foreign policy wonks in June, and a trip by DeLay in August. Abramoff was cc'd on the memo.

DeLay's chief of staff at the time, Ed Buckham, may have been part of that "advance team." In a January 21, 1998, AP story (headline: "You Won't Find Congressional Travelers in Coach"), Buckham, who now runs his own lobbying firm, said he had taken the Concorde from Paris to Washington in July 1997 after visiting Russia in advance of his boss. Buckham said his Concorde ticket, like the August 1997 junket, was paid for by the National Center for Public Policy Research. "We told the travel agent to just find the best flight," Amy Ridenour, the president of the National Center, told AP at the time. "Ed took the Concorde. I didn't realize that's what the travel agent picked."

But where did the National Center get the money? The *Wall Street Journal*'s David Rogers provided an answer on April 13. "The Russia trip was covered from an estimated $165,000 payment [to the center] from an international law firm seeking to promote exchanges with Russian businessmen," Rogers wrote—which would suggest the firm in question was the New York-based Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft. But it could also have been another firm, of course—Abramoff's, perhaps, or one friendly to Abramoff, who was friendly with Ridenour. Both were friends of DeLay's.

Wherever the money ultimately came from, the trip was a success. DeLay, his wife, and his top staff were joined in Moscow first by Ridenour, then Abramoff, then Julius Kaplan, a lawyer on the Chelsea account at Cadwalader. They golfed, met with Russian religious leaders, visited tourist attractions, and spoke with Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin. One night the group attended a sumptuous dinner party hosted by the heads of NaftaSib, a Russian energy company. DeLay met NaftaSib's president, Alexander Koulakovsky, and its executive vice president, Marina Nevskaya. NaftaSib was another client of Abramoff's at Preston Gates.

Little is known about NaftaSib's executives. Alexander Koulakovsky "graduated from Odessa Technological Institute in 1975," according to his company's literature, and left the Russian oil giant SibNeft in 1993 to start NaftaSib. Other than that I could find only an October 26, 1994, dispatch from Tass, the Russian news agency, which reported that an Alexander Koulakovsky was "arrested by authorities of Hatichohe, Northern Honshu, Japan, . . . for illegal storage of a handgun and 150 rounds of ammunition."

Even less is known about Marina Nevskaya. The NaftaSib promotional material says she "taught at the Military Diplomatic Academy and lectured at Moscow State University" until 1991, when the Soviet Union collapsed. Apparently she is "the author of several publications on the economy of Southeast Asia, economic cooperation between the USSR and Asian countries and textbooks on oriental languages." She is fluent, we are told, "in English, Vietnamese and French." There is no record of her in the Nexis news database prior to 2005.

Except this. The August 23, 2004, issue of the *Russian Oil and Gas Report* had an article on NaftaSib's bid to buy the remnants of YUKOS, the giant Russian oil firm run by Mikhail Khodorkovsky until he became a prisoner of the Russian government. The article—published six months before the latest controversy over DeLay—contains this aside:

> The names of Kulakovsky and Nevskaya, not very well known in Russia, are sufficiently well known in the U.S. Thus, in 1997 Naftasib paid for the Moscow part of the visit of leader of the house of representative of the US Congress Tom DeLay. Nevskaya accompanied DeLay on that visit to Moscow.

If NaftaSib paid for DeLay's trip, however, it did so indirectly. And thus we—and DeLay's critics—reach an impasse. Looking back, lobbyists were involved in the planning and execution of DeLay's trip to Russia; Russian energy interests took credit for the trip; the only question is who paid for it.

And that question has already been answered, more or less: the National Center for Public Policy Research. And according to the House rules, as long as lobbyists don't pay a congressman's expenses *directly*, everything is peachy. Were all such congressional trips to receive the level of scrutiny applied to DeLay's Russia boondoggle, it's safe to say, few of his colleagues would escape censure.

As Amy Ridenour said in a statement last week: "The National Center for Public Policy Research was careful to pay all the expenses associated with Congressman DeLay's trip." If that's so, DeLay may still be a symbol of the unappealing intersection of money and politics in Washington. But symbolism has never been a firing offense. ♦

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The Darmouth Insurgency

Tear down this speech code . . .

BY DUNCAN CURRIE

IF YOU'RE NOT a Dartmouth alum, there are still two reasons to care about this year's alumni trustee election: Peter Robinson and Todd Zywicki, who are running as insurgents. Robinson is an author and Hoover Institution scholar best known for penning Ronald Reagan's Berlin Wall speech in 1987. Zywicki is a George Mason University law professor and blogger for the popular *Volokh Conspiracy* site. They are Dartmouth grads—classes of 1979 and 1988, respectively. Each launched a petition drive last winter to get his name on the 2005 alumni trustee ballot, using Internet-assisted word-of-mouth to collect the required 500 signatures. Both received well over that number—thanks largely to the powers of the blogosphere.

Some of their campaign themes are unique to Dartmouth. But Robinson and Zywicki focused chiefly on an issue with nationwide relevance: politically correct campus speech codes. This touched a nerve. Voting, which is open to all Dartmouth alums, began on March 7 and winds up May 6. As some see it, a Robinson and/or Zywicki victory would be a watershed. "If they win," says David French, president of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), it will mark an "academic freedom counterinsurgency." But do the petition candidates have a prayer?

If recent history offers a guide, the answer is yes. In 2004, engineering tycoon T.J. Rodgers (Dartmouth '70), a self-described libertarian, mounted a similar petition bid and succeeded. Rodgers beat out three nominees handpicked by the Dartmouth alumni council. They were gunning for one open spot on the board. This year, Robinson and Zywicki are challenging four council-selected nominees in a race for two open positions.

Dartmouth's trustee rules are designed to lend the board a representative character. According to guidelines in place since 1891, alumni get to choose essentially half its members. After the 2005 election, for instance, the board will consist of nine charter trustees (chosen by the board itself), nine alumni trustees (voted in by the alums), plus two *ex officio* members: the Dartmouth president and the New Hampshire governor. But it's hardly a vibrant democracy. Ordinarily, the alumni council assembles the full docket of alumni nominees for every election. There is a petition loophole, though, exploited last year by Rodgers and now by Robinson and Zywicki.

Though their twin candidacies may seem prearranged, Robinson and Zywicki say it's mere serendipity. "We've only met once," says Robinson, "and talked on the phone ten times, maybe." That meeting came at a Hoover event in March. Both say they were spurred to run in part by Rodgers's success. And their issues—no to speech codes, yes to improving academic life for Dartmouth undergrads—mirror those of the Rodgers campaign.

Robinson, Zywicki, and Rodgers all insist the matters at stake don't conform to traditional left-right divides. "This is not a conservative-versus-liberal election," says Zywicki. "We've not run as conservatives." Nor has Rodgers been a right-wing crusader during his brief time on the board. "I have *scrupulously* avoided left-right issues on campus," Rodgers stresses.

Nevertheless, the presence on the ballot of two Dartmouth critics—and two conservative ones, at that—has spooked some alums, especially coming on the heels of Rodgers's victory. A group called "Alumni for a Strong Dartmouth" put up a website in February (*strongdartmouth.org*), which finds Robinson and Zywicki "lacking compared to the other candidates."

More strident criticism of the pair can be found at the "Dartmouth Alumni for Social Change" site (*alumsforsocialchange.org*). It features a caustic note from Susan Ackerman (Dartmouth '80), chair of the Dartmouth religion department, associating the two petition candidates with Rodgers and blasting their politics as "reactionary." Robinson and Zywicki, she writes, "long nostalgically for some 'Dear Old Dartmouth' of the past, without admitting the idealized past they crave represents a Dartmouth that was often hard on women, gays and lesbians, and minorities; monolithic in terms of its social life; and fostered an anti-intellectual environment."

The critics skirt a key question: Does Dartmouth uphold a de facto speech code, as Robinson and Zywicki charge? Their prime evidence is a letter Dartmouth president James Wright sent out in May 2001, explaining to the Dartmouth community why his administration had de-recognized the Zeta Psi fraternity (Zywicki's old frat). The gist was that Zeta Psi members had circulated a private intra-frat newsletter of sorts, in which they wrote lewd comments about two female undergrads.

The relevant portion of Wright's letter read as follows:

> As a community committed to fairness, respect, and openness, we have no patience with or tolerance for bigotry or demeaning behavior. I affirm here, with deep personal conviction, that Dartmouth is and will be an actively anti-sexist, anti-racist, and anti-homophobic institution and community. . . . In a community such as ours, one that depends so

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much upon mutual trust and respect, it is hard to understand why some want still to insist that their "right" to do what they want trumps the rights, feelings, and considerations of others. We need to recognize that speech has consequences for which we must account.

Though Wright claimed Dartmouth had no "speech code," David French notes that terms like "bigotry" and "demeaning behavior" are "highly subjective." This, insists French, *is* a speech code of "the worst kind"—one that is vague yet still has teeth.

Wright's letter vanished from the Dartmouth president's website last month. Try to find it, and you discover its location has been "moved." (But where? Calls to his office went unreturned.) Is it a coincidence that the document on Wright's website disappeared after Robinson and Zywicki zinged its contents? Probably not.

Either way, Rodgers applauds the letter's removal, and praises Wright for recent statements in which he's affirmed Dartmouth's commitment to free expression. "Now that the speech code is gone from the website," Rodgers says, "we're fully 10 percent of the way home." For his part, David French remains skeptical. FIRE continues to give Dartmouth a "red" grade—the lowest of three—in the category of protecting speech on campus. "If you elevate 'feelings' over the right to free expression, you're gonna get a bad rating," he explains.

Piqued alumni—along with parts of the administration—have lashed out at FIRE, and at Rodgers, Robinson, and Zywicki. What accounts for their hostility? Rodgers cites three factors. One: "We're outsiders." Two: "We said something negative," so the perception is "we're attacking the administration." Three: Alumni exhibit a "visceral" reaction to any criticism of their alma mater.

"I sort of slipped in by surprise," Rodgers says. But now there are two petition nominees in one year—and they've caught national attention. As French puts it, "One trustee is an anomaly." But three trustees might signify "the beginning of a movement." ♦

No-Nukes of the North

Vermont's very civil war over nuclear power.

BY GEOFFREY NORMAN

Brattleboro, Vermont

THE MEETING would be starting at 6:00 P.M. in Brattleboro, and I would have to drive across the state to get there. The event would last at least three hours, probably longer, so I might not get home much before midnight. And, then, the Red Sox and Yankees were playing at Fenway. Staying home seemed like a far more attractive prospect than sitting in the bleachers at a high school gym and listening to my fellow Vermonters talk about a subject they have been wearing out for more than 30 years now—nuclear power.

But I decided to go because, lately, the issue of nuclear power has come into play. Articles in *Wired* and *Forbes* have made the pro-nuclear case, and then, in a sure sign that the old attitudes were changing, *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof had written a pro-nuke piece a few days earlier. The new, trendy case for nuclear power is that it makes electricity without putting carbon into the air. If you believe that greenhouse gases are a cause of global warming and that this increase in the world's temperature will have catastrophic effects, then nukes look pretty good. Global warming is the hip, new crisis; Three Mile Island is so last century.

The anti-nuclear people, then, are losing ground and have become the reactionaries in a fight where they believe they are on the side of the future. In Vermont these people call themselves progressives, and the state's lone congressman, Bernie Sanders, is typical of the breed. Clinging with a death grip to the certainties of the '60s, they can be self-righteous, sanctimonious, utterly humorless, and incapable of civility when dealing with political opponents. (They also make good ice cream.) If you live in Vermont and don't share their faith, you can get pretty tired, pretty quickly of their didacticism. So I was looking forward, maliciously, to seeing them struggle with their new status.

When I got on the highway, I turned on the radio to Sean Hannity and Charles Rangel shouting at each other. The issue, it seemed, was Social Security reform. Rangel thought President Bush should be impeached and Hannity thought Rangel should apologize for saying so. It became less edifying after that. So I went with a tape of oldies, instead, and listened to Chuck Berry through a series of quaint little postcard towns, each with its village green, country store, and austere church steeple.

I wasn't sure of my directions but I knew I had the right place when I saw the rusting pickup with a hand-painted plywood sign in the bed. *Veterans Against Nuclear Poison*. Shaping up, I thought, to be that kind of night.

Banners on the walls of the gym commemorated various state championships in football, basketball, track, and skiing. Folding metal chairs had been arranged in rows from goal to goal and the bleachers had been pulled out to accommodate what looked to be about 600 people. Cultural profiling was no problem. The people with the pony tails were the anti-nukes.

The specific issue under consideration was "dry cask" storage at the Vermont Yankee nuclear plant a few miles south of the high school. The

Geoffrey Norman is a writer in Vermont.

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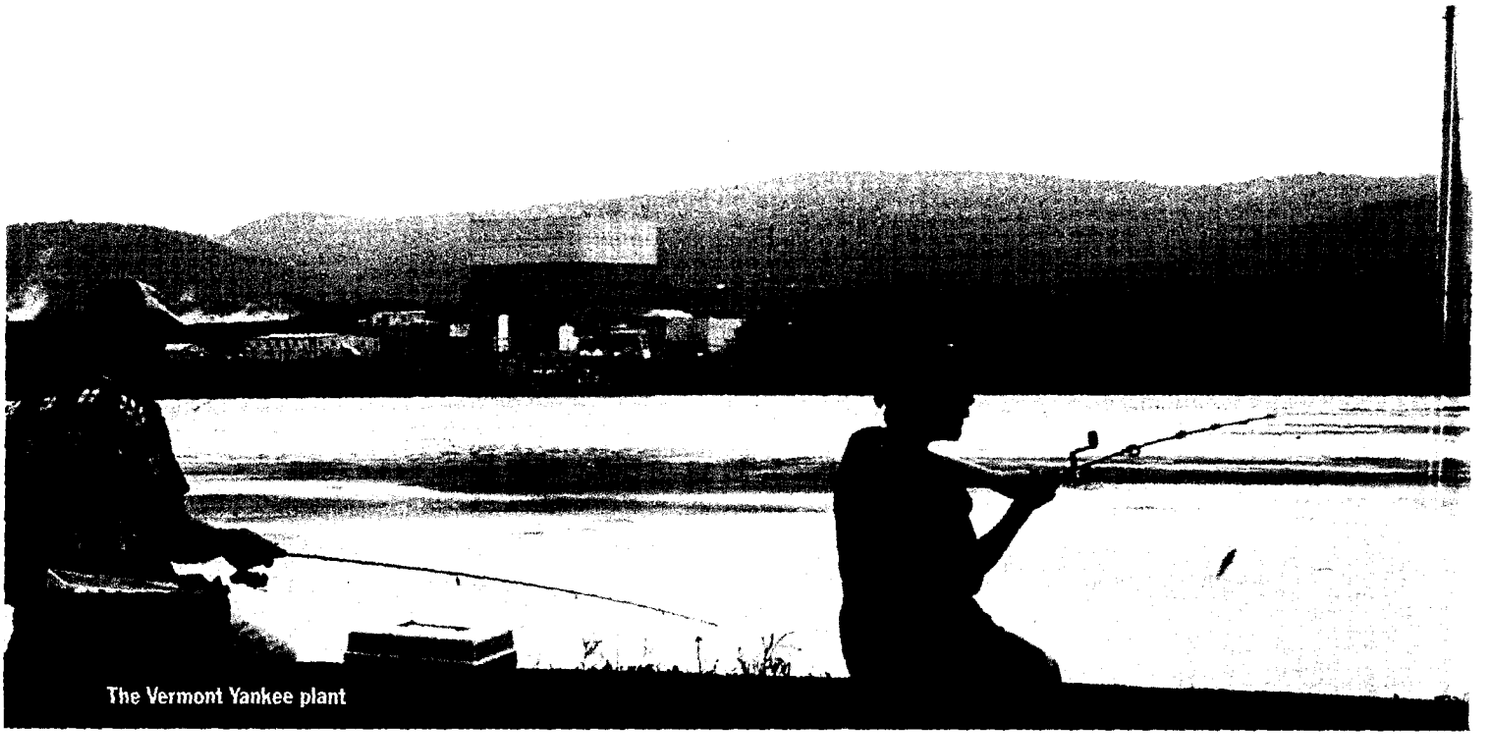

The Vermont Yankee plant

plant has been storing spent fuel in a seven-story pool of water since it began operating some 32 years ago on ground that had previously been a dairy farm. The pool was never meant for permanent storage. According to the original vision, most nuclear waste would be reprocessed and the rest would be stored safely somewhere else by the federal government.

Well, the federals changed their minds about reprocessing. Too much risk that some of the fissionable material that is a byproduct of the process would wind up in the wrong hands. (Europeans countries, among others, continue to reprocess.) And, after a couple of decades of research and millions of dollars in construction, a nuclear waste storage facility at Yucca Mountain in Nevada is still empty.

Nevada doesn't want the stuff and says putting it in Yucca Mountain is an unacceptable risk. Never mind that everyone from the NRC to the EPA has said the site is safe. The attitude is simply—Not In My Backyard. Or, in this case, Not In My *New* Backyard. Clark County is the fastest-growing county in the nation and it is, basically, Las Vegas. But a city built on chance doesn't want to take any chances with nuclear waste. Among the objections to Yucca Mountain is that there is no way of knowing if it will still be stable and safe 100,000 years from now. Anyone accustomed to the odds in a casino ought to be able to live with that kind of uncertainty.

But . . . the new Nevadans don't want the radioactive waste near their new homes. Never mind that the stuff was made in plants that provided electricity to their old homes (or that Las Vegas uses electricity more profligately than any city in the world). In America, you get to pack up and leave the old life behind, especially if you are moving to Vegas. The spent fuel is part of your former existence—like the bad debts and discarded spouse. On their side, the Nevadans have the new minority leader of the Senate, Harry Reid, making sure the honeycomb of tunnels under Yucca Mountain will remain vacant at least until the spent fuel pool at Vermont Yankee fills up in 2007 or 2008, and maybe longer.

So, because the feds welched on their end of the deal, Vermont Yankee became a nuclear waste storage facility—or dump, depending on your point of view. This presents an opportunity for people who never wanted the plant in the first place. Their solution? Deny a permit to store spent fuel in dry casks, close the plant down, and go to "clean, renewable energy."

The meeting at Brattleboro gave them a chance to make this case in front of a small group of legislators who had come down from Montpelier, the capital, to listen. One of the first to make the case, read an account of the lives of the first Vermonters. They shared the place, it seems, with mastodons.

And your point is? I found myself thinking.

"That was 12,000 years ago," the man said, and his point became plain enough. "Twelve thousand years is one-half the half-life of nuclear waste."

Several engineers made the case for dry cask storage, and they were persuasive. "I've worked with reactors in the Navy," one of them said, calmly, "and I've been in the nuclear industry since I left the service. I've worked around dry cask storage containers. It is a safe, passive system that does not rely on electricity, pumps, or heat exchangers. The alternative to storing waste this way is to generate electricity by methods that will produce a different kind of waste and put it into the atmosphere. Millions of tons of it."

The arguments were familiar. Some people stated them more artfully than others. One man talked about "glow-in-the-dark maple syrup," and another raised the specter of terrorism. "There is a bullseye on that plant," he said.

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An attractive blonde woman called herself an "advocate for the climate," and made the case for nuclear power as an answer to global warming, "potentially the greatest environmental catastrophe in the history of the world."

Nuclear power, a later speaker agreed, was the alternative to "massive die-offs due to global warming."

This is a big theme among newer advocates of nuclear power, and you heard it, over and over, along with the more usual economic arguments. You also heard about the dangers of nuclear waste, the desirability of alternative, renewable energy, and the low cunning of the plant's owners ("an out-of-state corporation").

Like most people in the room, I suspect, I wasn't swayed by any of these arguments. I favored the dry cask storage plan specifically, and nuclear power in general, before I went into the gym and I still favored them, almost four hours later, when I left. But, unexpectedly, I felt more and more charitable as the night wore on.

The state of Vermont had been handed a problem by other, grander people down in Washington. As an exhibition of the way they did business down there, you had the Senate hearings on John Bolton's fitness to serve as ambassador to the United Nations. Those proceedings did not exhibit a small fraction of the thoughtfulness and civility I saw in the Brattleboro high school gym where, among others, a former governor of Vermont waited three hours for his opportunity to speak for three minutes (pro nuke). He packed more eloquence into those three minutes than Joseph Biden has managed in a lifetime.

If the meeting didn't change minds, it clarified thinking in an atmosphere of civility and seriousness, and that is worth a Red Sox game every time.

When I was back on the road, I turned the radio on and got Bill O'Reilly haranguing some poor civilian in his accustomed fashion. I gave him three minutes then went back to Chuck Berry. ♦

AP / Franka Bruns

Joschka Fischer, Gerhard Schröder

Fischer Weighs In

A German Green sides with George W. Bush on China. BY VICTORINO MATUS

According to well-placed German sources, the rumors swirling around foreign minister Joschka Fischer are true. He has, in fact, gained a lot of weight. "Have you seen him lately?" asked one German politician. "He is huge!"

He's been here before. Ten years ago, the 5'11" Fischer weighed a hefty 246 pounds. In his book *My Long Run Toward Myself*, the minister confesses to eating "sausage, ham, cheese, eggs, fried potatoes, bread, butter and jam—just for breakfast. Then I would have an opulent lunch . . . followed by curry wurst and french fries as an afternoon snack, before really cutting loose with an enormous dinner." But after his third wife left him in 1996, Fischer decided to become a new man, shedding 81 pounds in one year.

At a press conference in 2002, I asked Fischer about his regimen. He said he still managed a brisk eight miles per run, and about 24 miles each week—the one exception being shortly after 9/11, when he was hunkered down in his office, sometimes for 48 hours straight. (On a related note, former chancellor Helmut Kohl once said, "When I get up at night, I'm not thinking about history, but about plundering the refrigerator.") Needless to say, Fischer has been spending a lot of time in his office lately, unable to run those eight miles a day, and possibly gaining all 81 pounds back. "He may be even more now," speculates one German television producer.

Considering the amount of stress the Green party minister has been under lately, the relapse should not come as a shock. First there was September 11 and the war in Afghanistan. Then came the invasion of Iraq and the rift between his boss, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, and President Bush. Currently Fischer is in the midst of a scandal called the "Visa Affair," in which, on his watch, tens of thousands of Ukrainians were mistakenly issued visas to enter Germany—many of them prostitutes and gangsters involved in sex trafficking. Fischer has admitted to making mistakes, as critics clamor for his resignation. He is scheduled to testify before an investigative committee later this month.

But in the midst of all this, Fischer did something quite interesting. In an interview in *Die Zeit* last week, he broke with his government's position and said he was not prepared to lift the arms embargo that the European Union has imposed on China since the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989. In doing this, Fischer sided with the Bush administration, which had been lobbying Europe to retain the arms embargo. "The chancellor knows that on this matter I have a skeptical attitude," he explained, cit-

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ing regional security concerns, the position of the United States, and human rights.

But while the chancellor may know this, he certainly can't be happy about it—Schröder has been one of the staunchest advocates for lifting the arms ban. "Now the question occurs if the embargo is still appropriate in view of a new leadership in Beijing and moderate progress in liberalization," Schröder told the *Wall Street Journal Europe* last February. "We have come to the conclusion that it is not appropriate. According to the latest plans the embargo may be lifted in the first half of 2005."

Schröder has had to revise those plans in the intervening months. Last week, the European Parliament voted overwhelmingly for a resolution urging the E.U. not to lift the embargo. Even Schröder's fellow Social Democrats in the parliament voted for the resolution, which called for human rights reforms and described Taiwan as "a model of democracy for the whole of China." It appears that the arms embargo will stay for now.

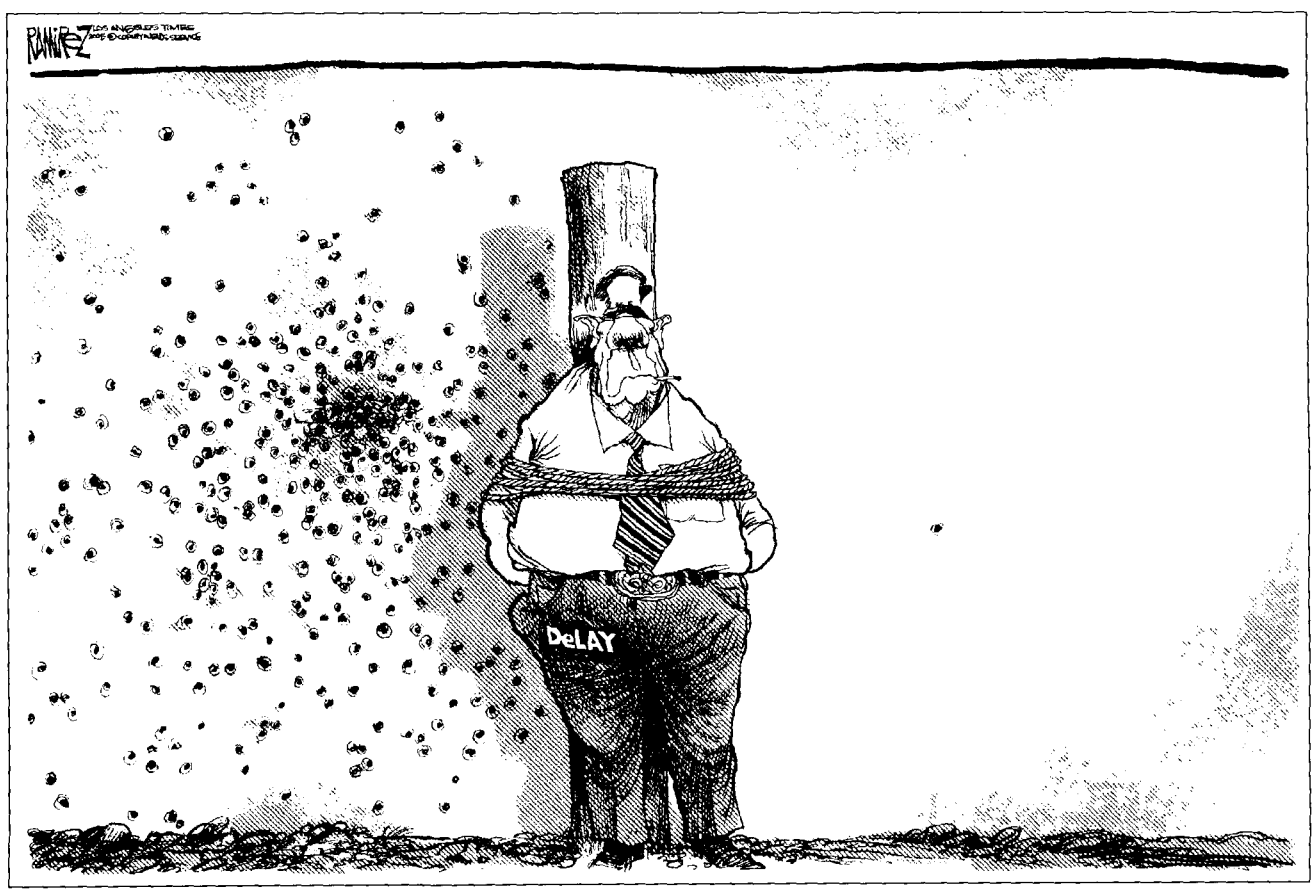
Fischer's break with his chancellor has occasioned much comment from friend and foe alike.

"That Fischer comes out against the chancellor is very unusual, and it has a lot to do with the other problems he has, especially the Visa Affair," says Friedbert Pflüger, the foreign policy spokesman of the opposition Christian Democrats. "As you know, he isn't the most popular politician. He has lost that place, he's going down in the polls. What he needs now is the support of his own people more than anything else. He wants to rally his party around him. Nobody believes that either Fischer or Schröder has a lot of principles. So it is a question of tactics, and in the moment he needs his own party more than he needs the chancellor's consent."

One prominent German Green who asked not to be named disagrees, saying "Fischer wouldn't do this just because his party was doing it. Fischer would never do anything for the party. That is absurd. But it is true he does have public opinion on his side—it is also the right side. . . . On the one hand, I know he was convinced [lifting the embargo] was not a good idea from the start. He didn't say anything publicly but he wasn't for it. But doing this now was a bold move."

Indeed, throughout the Iraq war, Fischer was a silent partner, deferring to the chancellor, even if he disagreed with his approach. "Fischer debated the issues and asked the right questions," says the unnamed Green, "but he never went as far as Schröder did because he never believed in what Schröder did, which was to go anti-American. . . . The question is, Why did he do it now? And for that I don't really have an answer."

Whether it be for principled or political reasons, Fischer was right to express his "skeptical" opinion on the lifting of the arms ban. His comment had an impact not only in Germany but throughout the European Union. For this he deserves much credit. And a nice hot plate of curry wurst. With a side of fries. ♦



Michael Ramirez

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The Ward Churchill Notoriety Tour

The worst professor in America meets his adoring public

By Matt Labash

San Francisco

On a late March evening in the Mission District, the line stretches down the block. Hopefuls are anxious to make the cut at $10 a head; the auditorium in the Women's Building only seats 400. It's an explosively colorful structure featuring murals of warrior poets and others who've been lodged in the tread of the jackboot of oppression, like Audre Lorde and Rigoberta Menchu. From the feverish intensity of those standing in line, you might think they'd turned out for the *Vagina Monologues* or *American Idol* auditions. Instead, they've come to hear a craggy-faced ethnic studies professor from the University of Colorado-Boulder liken 9/11 victims to Nazi war criminals.

Rocky Mountain News / Polaris / Chris Schneider

Churchill on the Boulder campus, February 2005

The professor, Ward Churchill, became famous in late January, when a college-newspaper reporter dusted off a previously ignored three-year-old essay Churchill had written for the Internet entitled "Some People Push Back." The essay was later expanded (complete with footnotes), and included in Churchill's book *On the Justice of Roosting Chickens: Reflections on the Consequences of U.S. Imperial Arrogance and Criminality*. In the essay, Churchill advanced the provocative thesis that the amoral money-changers who worked at the World Trade Center, the materialistic purveyors of third-world exploitation and genocide—or "little Eichmanns," in his signature formulation—essentially got what was coming to America after years of military aggression and unjust foreign policy. It wasn't some senseless tragedy, but a natural plot progression. We can delude ourselves by boo-hooing and wearing Stars and Stripes lapel pins, but the big karmic wheel keeps on turnin' (I paraphrase, but barely).

As is always the case when Hitler's minions are invoked, it was all-hands-on-deck on the cable chat shows. Churchill was the most exciting thing to come out of Colorado since Columbine, or maybe even JonBenet Ramsey. (Churchill himself says his favorite show is *The Ward Churchill Factor*, since Bill O'Reilly has done no less than 31 segments on him.) Predictably, the political right—everyone from Colorado governor Bill Owens to Rudy Giuliani—called for Churchill's head to be stuck on a pike. Even more predictably, the left did what the left does best: sign support petitions and compare the right to Joe McCarthy.

As a result of all this controversy, Churchill's popularity is soaring. Already required reading at over 100 universities, Churchill is a prolific, if not downright logorrheic, author. He's written or edited over 20 books, and while his specialty is Native American studies, whatever he writes tends to be of a piece, with titles such as *A Little Matter of Genocide*, *Fantasies of the Master Race*, and *Agents of Repression*.

Having headed the Colorado chapter of the American Indian Movement (AIM) for several decades, having boasted of his affiliation with the Black Panthers and his days teaching bomb-making to the Weathermen, he's more than just an angry professor. He's a nostalgia ride at the Aging Radical Theme Park. Pay ten bucks, and it's like watching your parents' college yearbooks transubstantiated into flesh and blood. Pre-controversy, Churchill already did about three speaking gigs a month. But since, the number of invitations has tripled, and his fee, when he's not doing pro-bono work, is at five grand plus expenses.

Then there's all the pregame hype, with blustery death threats, angry editorial denunciations, and the occasional SWAT team working security on the roof. It's not a bad

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quarter's work for an academic who just a few months ago was heard mainly within the walls of his "Indians in Film" class, and who was lucky to move a few units of his "In a Pig's Eye" lecture CD. At this clip, he might surpass Che Guevara in commodified outrage, the latter having posthumously set the standard with *www.thechestore.com* "for all your revolutionary needs" (Che shooter glasses are only $11 plus shipping).

I came to San Francisco to soak up Churchill's rising-star aura. His perfectly pleasant fourth wife, Natsu Saito—his de facto publicist and fellow ethnic studies professor—permits me to shadow Churchill off-and-on during his four-day stand in the Bay Area. Right before he goes on for his Women's Building speech, I'm escorted to a spare upper room. Churchill is there ministering to his disciples, a couple of his students who've followed him out on spring break, as well as some functionaries from his publisher, AK Press—a "workers' cooperative" that cranks out beach-reads like *Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice*, along with inspirational T-shirts suggesting "Whitey Will Pay."

Churchill is sitting at a table, winding up a funny story. I miss the setup, but am just in time for the big closer in which he cites Tom Wolfe's riff on the "shiny-black-shoe" cluelessness of undercover cops. I grab a metal folding chair behind him, silently taking in all 6'5" of him.

As on most days, he is denim'ed and boot'ed, his hair featuring two gray racing stripes down either side that tuck behind his prodigious ears, pushing them out as if he were trying to receive *The O'Churchill Factor* on twin satellite dishes. He has the lived-in and leathered quality of Nick Nolte in a post DUI-mugshot, and the Sunday-Morning-Coming-Down, outlaw Zen of a Kris Kristofferson.

Like Kristofferson's "Pilgrim," he's a "walking contradiction, partly truth and partly fiction." (More on the fiction later.) He's steered so far left, he's right again, and one of the ways in which this manifests itself is his stubborn insistence on jettisoning politically correct niceties, like bans on smoking indoors. He reaches for an unfiltered Pall Mall, his three-pack-a-day habit likely to do the 57-year-old in before cranky talk show hosts or tenure committees can.

Perhaps sensing that I am starting to feel like a pair of shiny-black-shoes myself, he turns to work me into the conversation. "So, how are my friends at THE WEEKLY STANDARD?" he inquires. We small-talk for a few minutes, and when I start interviewing his disciples, we're shown the door by his wife, so he can collect his thoughts. I ask Churchill what his pregame ritual is. "Just the ceremony of the sacred cigarette," he says.

The students are rather media-friendly. "I was arrested at the regents meeting saying, 'You all are starting a new era of McCarthyism,'" one boasts. "Just Google my name and you'll find it all." Another was on Bill O'Reilly's show, though he seems disappointed that John Gibson was guest-hosting. When I ask what Churchill's appeal is, one says, "His work has inspired us. His words are weapons because they show what the United States government is guilty of throughout its whole history."

"He's fighting against terrorism," the other says. "We are destroying whole peoples, nearing levels of genocide, that's how bad the U.S. military is." The kids are excited, but are calmed down a bit when a cooler head interrupts. Daniel Burton-Rose, a guy with hoop earrings and an AK Press T-shirt, is sitting in a nearby chair, reading a book on Chinese medicine. He is himself the author of *Confronting Capitalism*, and when I carelessly identify him as an anarchist, he corrects me, saying he's an "anarcho-daoist." Clearly I've reached the rarefied strata where even people's shorthand IDs contain dialectical disputes.

To grossly dumb down Daniel's argument, which would take several pages to replicate, Churchill is precisely the galvanizing public intellectual the anti-globalization movement needs. For while many elements of the movement seem contradictory—the neo-Marxists agitating for a transformed and all-controlling state, the anarchists espousing the obliteration of the state altogether—all sides, including the boutique'ers in between, are unanimous on one tenet: America, as it's presently constituted, sucks.

Ward makes arguments against American injustice more effectively than others, says Daniel, partly because "he's a Native American—there's not really that many people who are going to deny . . . genocide against the Native Americans. So how are they dismissing him? They're saying he's white." And herein begins the fiction portion of the Kristoffersonian equation.

The week I catch up with Churchill, he has just dodged a bullet while simultaneously getting fitted for a noose. His university's board of regents spent seven weeks looking into his incendiary comments, then released a report (after three delays) exonerating him on First Amendment grounds. But over the course of the investigation, so many other allegations came to the fore—from academic fraud to fake Indian-hood—that Churchill is now being investigated by the university's Standing Committee on Research Misconduct. He tells me, "I ain't goin' down on that, man." But if he goes down—and it could easily be several years before this scenario plays out, long enough for the Pall Malls to run their course—it will be in the manner of Al Capone, who went away on tax evasion, not for the original murder and mayhem.

Churchill not only likes the sound of his own voice, he

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likes the sight of it. His CV runs 41 pages, and lists everything he's written from obscure articles to dustjacket blurbs. But even with all that detail, there're still plenty of holes in the narrative. For over a decade, his bitter rivals in the national American Indian Movement (distinct from his own excommunicated Colorado AIM chapter) have sniped at his claimed Indian ancestry, as have a raft of fellow Indian activists, journalists, and even the Keetoowah band of Cherokee, to which he claims affiliation. (They say it was merely an honorary membership, the same kind extended to "Indians" like former president Bill Clinton.)

While Churchill has said he's everything from 1/16 to 3/16 Indian, reporters have uncovered a lily-white upbringing in Illinois. Also, the one Indian ancestor he's named appears to have been white. (The man's mother was killed and scalped during a Creek Indian raid.) Considering that Churchill's ancestry (the non-English/Swiss-German part of it, that is) is allegedly responsible for his receiving fast-track tenure, and that he embraces it so wholeheartedly as to refer to "Ward Churchill" as "my colonial name," his critics have not been kind. They've called him "pseudo-Indian" and "Iron Eyes Cody" and even "Tonto." In the *News from Indian Country* newspaper, cartoonist Marty Two Bulls recently depicted Churchill's head on a chicken's body, peering into a "Real Injun Kit!" '70s activist model, complete with AIM T-shirt, shades, and Mingo-style wig.

Churchill plays Che

Polaris

As if the guy isn't already getting hit where it hurts, a spate of scholars, some of them Indian, have likewise opened up an academic front in the Churchill wars, charging he's guilty not only of plagiarism but of fabricating facts, such as that the U.S. Army deliberately distributed smallpox-infested blankets to Indians. Then there are the discrepancies in his Vietnam service. Did he wield a .50 caliber machine gun and walk point with the nickname "Chief," as he's claimed? Or does he suffer flashbacks only when a projector blows a bulb, since old records and résumés suggest that he was a projectionist and "public information specialist" in Vietnam? On and on it goes, each allegation becoming more inscrutable.

Churchill strenuously denies everything that doesn't square with his accounts, even the portions of his accounts that seemingly don't square with each other. And his lawyer has likened the Indian inquiry to "the Nazi standard for racial purity." But despite all the bad juju coming his way, such attention has delivered him a gift that a guy in the book-a-year business can never have too much of: good material.

Inside the Women's Building auditorium, I take my seat in the media balcony, "media" being used loosely to describe the people who point their cameras Churchill's way, then applaud everything he says. Below us is a mass of the usual suspects: the masked banditos, the grown men wearing chicken heads in homage to Churchill's book title, the tie-dyed frizz-balls who look like spokesmodels for Cherry Garcia ice cream, all emitting the dank human musk that is common in rooms full of people who are so concerned about the military-industrial complex that they don't have time to concern themselves with doing laundry.

Churchill takes the dais, uncoiling his long frame like a python warming itself in the sun, and lets his pearl-buttoned denim shirt drop to the floor, giving it an angry kick. He's wearing a stained T-shirt. In an over-pronounced Indian cadence (what Indian activist and long-time Churchill nemesis Suzan Harjo calls his "Tonto talk"), he brings greetings from the elders of the Keetoowah band of Cherokee, and uncorks his customary tribute to Leonard Peltier, still rotting in a cage on false charges.

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He tells the people that he hasn't come to speak "truth to power," since "power never listens. Power knows everything I'm going to say better than I do." Instead, he's speaking "truth to people in the teeth of power, and that's the only truth I know." At this point, Churchill could be enjoying the love-bombing he gets from the expectant audience. But instead, he'd rather throw a fragmentation grenade. "Charlie Brennan, are you here?" he asks in his low, tomcat growl.

Brennan is a *Rocky Mountain News* scribe who has done some of the most exhaustive reporting on the Churchill saga, even unearthing ex-wives who've called Churchill a bullying control freak and worse. Brennan is in the audience, and the room turns to see him scribbling away furiously without looking up. "Yeah, Hi Charlie!" bellows Churchill. "Having a nice day now? My turn. I got the high ground. . . . Are you still beating your wife, Charlie? Answer me yes or no, please. And remember, I got nine people who hate your guts and are going to comment on whatever it is you have to say." After demanding to see proof that Brennan is white (he'd probably never felt whiter), Churchill pushes the assault: "And you purport to be a man, . . . yet only one of your parents was, and you know it! . . . I'm practicing the journalist trade. . . . I expect a job at the *Rocky Mountain News* when I get back."

The crowd might've yelled "Off with his head!" but it was hard to tell since they were speaking in tongues. And this was all before Churchill got to the Eichmann charge, which had been grossly misinterpreted the first time around. Of the World Trade Center victims, Churchill needs to make one thing clear. "I didn't actually say they were Eichmann, I said they were little Eichmanns." By that, he means that like Eichmann, who didn't directly kill anyone, and who was merely following orders by overseeing Jewish transport operations and other logistical concerns, they were good Germans, "the technocrats of empire," who participated, perhaps even unwittingly, in the immiseration of countless cultures.

Forget the sloppy historical analogy, since even if you favor a heads-up comparison between modern-day America and Nazi Germany, Eichmann was a bit more proactive than Churchill allows, recounting in his own words how he witnessed a mother shot with a baby in her arms, "his brains splattered all around, also over my leather overcoat. My driver helped me remove them."

Forget, also, that if you page through the obituaries of Cantor Fitzgerald financiers—that company being Churchill's oft-cited embodiment of American complicity and callousness—you discover all sorts of examples that complicate Churchill's line: There were people like Juan Cisneros, who volunteered as a Big Brother, and who only wanted to be a bond trader until he could sock away enough money for his parents, who'd immigrated from Guatemala. Or like Matthew Leonard, Cantor's director of litigation, who helped the homeless and did extensive pro bono work for poor people in Chinatown. Such lives couldn't possibly be as noble as getting paid out of the same compulsory-taxes kitty that finances our unjust wars, or cataloguing the stereotypes in *Dances with Wolves*, or collecting five grand a throw to feed discontent to roomfuls of emaciated anarchists, when what they most need is a hot shower and a cheeseburger.

What Churchill is really trying to say is that from Wounded Knee to the Tokyo Firebombing to our sanctions starving half a million children in Iraq (his favorite talking point), we are guilty of an "uninterrupted stream of massacres." Saddam Hussein—who cared about Iraqi children enough to tie them to tanks as human shields, who skimmed $20 billion from the Oil-for-Food program after it was implemented in 1996, and who before that turned down deal after deal for humanitarian aid if it came with monitoring conditions to ensure it was being used for food (all while finding the scratch to build 48 palaces)—doesn't figure in Churchill's narrative.

I spend another hour or so watching Churchill stoke the fire, telling the assembled that they should get serious: "Untangle your head from the jewelry, fill in the holes with body putty, put on some straight looking clothes so they can't see who you are. Get inside. Bring your weapon to bear." He then walks it back from being an endorsement of violence: "Oh my God, he's advocating people turning themselves into suicide bombers! No, I don't think suicide is the constructive approach. . . . Maybe it's your ideas, maybe you can convince people."

But violence is certainly something he hasn't foresworn in books like *Pacifism as Pathology* (1998), which argues that sit-ins and Smokeouts just aren't cutting much ice. Leading by example is Ed Mead, who wrote the book's introduction, and who spent 18 years in prison as a member of the George Jackson Brigade, which bombed, among other things, three different government buildings in the 1970s. Churchill claims in the book that he once taught a hands-on workshop entitled "Demystification of the Assault Rifle" (a group of lesbian feminists showed up and denounced it as "macho swaggering"). And he admits to me, "I have more guns than the average liberal and less than Charlton Heston," and, "yes, I've participated in armed struggle," since the "right to engage in the use of armed force to counter the forcible usurpation of rights . . . is rather prominently enshrined in both domestic and international law."

On a later occasion, I press him on this subject, citing a 1987 *Denver Post* piece in which he bragged about teaching the Weathermen (largely known for property destruction)

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how to make bombs and fire weapons—"which end does the bullet go, what are the ingredients, how do you time the damn thing." He freely admits that he was involved with the Weathermen for six months, even giving them firearms orientation, before three of them accidentally blew themselves up (with a bomb that was intended for a Ft. Dix military dance, where more than punchbowls would presumably have been targeted).

But about explosives training specifically, he now hedges. "I wasn't really qualified to provide it. There were army field manuals floating around and I was undoubtedly asked—and answered as best I could," he wrote me in an email, "but that doesn't really constitute training." He adds that the FBI, after investigating him, concluded as much. Though that may be true, I ask him, wouldn't answering questions about explosives be the same as "teaching"—he needn't have organized a formal weekend workshop? On this, he failed to respond.

Churchill, it seems, likes to play at being dangerous, then gets miffed when people take him at his word. Whether he regards the overthrow of a totalitarian maniac like Saddam Hussein as the above-mentioned "usurpation of rights" warranting a call to arms isn't entirely clear, though I doubt it. But what is, as I look down on the rhapsodic crowd, is that the row of guys in chicken heads are all clucking in unison while Churchill affects his revolutionary pose. It's enough to recall the words of Austrian satirist Karl Kraus, who said, "The secret of the demagogue is to make himself as stupid as his audience, so they believe they are as clever as he."

The next day, we're set to meet at the 10th Annual Anarchist Book Fair in Golden Gate Park. Only a cynic would suggest Churchill's full-time controversialism is a marketing gimmick to move product (he's addressing the anarchists for love, not money). Still, material wealth can be an unfortunate byproduct of the work. At the vending table at last night's event, one of the AK Press employees told me Churchill's "Chickens" book had nearly hit 100 on *Amazon.com*—"It was ahead of Stephen King's new novel!"

Here at the book fair, too, anarchists are doing convincing impressions of happy little capitalists, pushing tens of thousands of products, from "Murder King" T-shirts (featuring the Burger King logo) to "Serfs up!" bumper stickers to pamphlets like "From Knapping to Crapping—Running Riot Through the Supermarket of Skills! . . . starting points for self-emancipation."

The courtyard of the park's agriculture building is decorated with red and black balloons, as if a birthday party were being thrown for Satan, or maybe the Chicago Bulls. And again, the musty ferment reminds me of a sweat sock in a junior high gym locker, while I'm left wondering how so many people can wear so much black and still be mismatched. Outside, the Radical Cheerleaders give their hairy-legged all, performing cheers with onanistic themes: "Masturbate, don't detonate / Orgasms are really great!" While inside, spoken-word artists are in need of rhyming dictionaries for something to couple with "genocide" (refried, bromide, walleyed—one wants to scream at the lack of imagination).

In what I assume is the speakers' green room, since it has lots of Darjeeling tea and eggplant sandwiches, some graybeard is yelling over a really loud film he's screening about the Landless Farmers' Movement. "They're the poorest people in Brazil." "What?" says a girl, in between bites of eggplant, "They're the forest people of Brazil?"

I run into Churchill and his wife outside and, to get his goat, tell him I just saw his *bête noire*, the *Rocky Mountain News*'s Charlie Brennan. Churchill glowers, or at least I think he does since he tends not to remove his Dolce & Gabbana wraparound shades. He's still smarting over Brennan's latest effort, and about general attacks on his Indianness, so he says of Brennan, "What's it like to be an Irishman—can't document the Irish, or the man. He made it up."

All this anarchism has made me thirsty, so I cross the street to get a Diet Coke, and take a coffee order from Churchill and Saito. All I can find, however, is a Starbucks. When I come back to the fair with two venti something-or-anothers, surly anarchists look like they want to kick my windows in, just like they did the Seattle Starbucks back at WTO '99.

Churchill, to his credit, doesn't subscribe to any meaningless "praxis of personal purity," so he takes his coffee (black) with a shrug and lights a Pall Mall. I ask if he's an anarchist, and though they have an affinity, he says no. He's an Indigenist. Not quite sure what that entails, I ask him to explain. He's a wordy bugger, and goes on for a good while about a "consciously synchronous level of population" and a "latitude of action that is governed in a self-regulating manner" and a "unity in the differentiation that's consonant with natural order." I figure this would all go down a lot easier if I'd first eaten peyote.

Later, on my own, I explore his philosophy in a manifesto conveniently titled "I am an Indigenist." While Churchill generally shies from being prescriptive—much more fun to talk about what others have done wrong—this essay is the exception. The "highest priority of my political life," he writes, is "the rights of indigenous peoples," for whom he foresees the restoration of land. He envisions a "North American Union of Indigenous Nations" that would comprise "roughly one third of the continental U.S." Ever the pragmatist, Churchill says the region would

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enjoy as much autonomy as it wanted, and that with Indians controlling all those natural resources, much-needed conservation will prevail in a land now completely overpopulated. (He cites an ecological demographer's estimate that North America was "thoroughly saturated with humans by 1840," and figures we're due for a good dose of population control, possibly through "voluntary sterilization" and "voluntary abortion.")

As for the natural resources controlled by the new autonomous nation, they would be shared with others only to meet "basic needs." "What I'm saying probably sounds extraordinarily cruel," he writes, but to "those imbued with the belief that they hold a 'God-given right' to play a round of golf on a well-watered green beneath the imported palm trees outside an air-conditioned casino at the base of the Superstition Mountains . . . tough. Those days can be ended with neither hesitation nor apology."

Churchill tells me he fancies himself a "true conservative," in that he's a strict constructionist who believes our government should abide by its laws and treaties—including the 400 or so we've broken with the Indians. And he also wishes me to know that he puts his anti-Communist and anti-Marxist credentials up against anyone's. But after reading his Indigenist platform, I'm yearning for the carefree kegger that was *Das Kapital.*

Churchill goes inside and, without ever removing his shades, gives another slam-bang rendition of his Eichmann spiel, punctuating his sermon with a raised fist and a "Power to the people!" (no kidding). Afterwards, he can't get outside fast enough to light another cigarette. I follow him backstage out to a semisecluded courtyard, and compliment him on bringing his A-game. As 9/11-victims-are-Nazis speeches go, it's one of the most forceful I've heard. He shrugs like it was nothing, telling me how he does it. He uses "the intellectual grounding . . . to make the articulation," but then delivers it in terms "that will be understood by the brother on the block."

As he breaks it down for me, a small throng of admirers encircle us. A woman with a foamy cow-head on her hand steps forward. She introduces herself to Churchill as a "video activist and puppeteer." Her little friend is "Barbara Bovine, a reporter for NO-BS news." She asks him for an interview, and he motions to me with some relief, telling her he's busy. But I refuse to let him off the hook. "It's all right, have at it," I say, "Don't want to miss this." Churchill looks pained, but consents to the cow interview.

Barbara Bovine starts in, saying she's a mad cow, not because she's diseased, but "pissed at how my species has been treated." When she questions him on the morality of paying taxes on things you don't want to support, such as food, he responds, "I'm going to have to eat you, aren't I?" Barbara looks perplexed, as much as she can for an inanimate object. "Are you not a vegetarian?" she asks. "Of course not!" he thunders. "I'm of the planet of the carrot. Why would I eat my relatives?"

Churchill's general surliness, however, doesn't deter well-wishers. A free-radio geek steps forward with a microphone asking him to cut some promos for various stations. A Middle-Eastern looking gent, who says he's on his way to jail for perjury after "someone kinda rolled on me" (adding sheepishly that it has something to do with "terrorists recruiting fighters, which is all I'm gonna say"), wants to thank Churchill for telling "us what's wrong. . . . We'll go from there." A fat guy in shorts says, "If it weren't for you, we wouldn't have our freedoms." Churchill looks embarrassed, saying, "That's a lot of weight to bear. . . . Maybe we ought to spread that one around a little."

Then a senior citizen in sandals approaches, saying that, while he loved everything Churchill said, it's the same thing he's "heard for the last 45-50 years. . . . I was waiting for a plan, I was waiting for specifics." At this, Churchill grows visibly agitated, even more so than when he complained to the puppeteer that her "cow's eyes look absolutely demented when you shake its head in stupid, swinging little circles."

Churchill straightens his back, momentarily forgets his smoke, and fixes the old geez with a hard stare: "Well, I'll tell you what, my man, *that* is my part. Now you got some place you want to take it beyond? That's great. Get to it. . . . But I am sick unto death of people telling me what I should be saying when they're not saying it themselves. And most of the people in that room haven't been around 40 or 50 years, okay?"

Afterwards, I lean over to Churchill, asking if he's comfortable being the new Che. "I'm not him, I'm not any of those people, I'm just me," he says. "But they're trying to make you that," I add. "I understand that," he says, "But I don't have a focal theory, okay?" I ask if he's comfortable with the performing-monkey obligations he's now shouldering, since three months ago, he never contemplated talking to a cow puppet on camera.

"That is actually true," he nods wearily. "Three months ago I was not talking to a cow puppet. If I get my karma burnished right, I will probably not ever be talking to a cow puppet again."

In the midst of Churchill's California swing comes Easter Sunday, and I'd like Churchill and his wife to attend services with me. But I don't take them for the Easter-bonnets-and-lilies type. So I invite them to a uniquely San Franciscan institution: the Saint John Will-I-Am Coltrane African Orthodox Church, a Christ-

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ian sect that both worships and teaches from the works of the late jazz saxophonist.

Churchill is intrigued, but begs off, citing the need to visit his dear friend, the 83-year-old civil rights activist Yuri Kochiyama, who cradled Malcolm X's head as he was dying in the Audubon Ballroom (Kochiyama recently compared Churchill to Malcolm and Che).

That night, Churchill, his wife Natsu, and I meet up at the Hotel Durant bar, just off the Berkeley campus. I am feeling spiritually renewed and nurtured in the bosom of A Love Supreme. Having attended the three-hour worship service, which featured so many saxophone players that one or two could slip off to the bathroom in the middle of a solo and not be missed, I present Churchill with a Saint John Coltrane T-shirt. He is extremely grateful, and we tuck into a bay-windowed nook with a no smoking sticker displayed prominently. "I usually put that right over my ashtray," he rasps.

Seeing as how we're getting along so famously, I pop out my tape recorder and start with a softball. "Why do you hate America?" I ask him.

"Next question," he says. "Why do you beat your wife? When you answer that, I'll answer yours."

I go with a different approach, asking what Easter means to him. "Easter?" he says, as if he's just heard the word for the first time. "That's when that poor man was crucified. Is that after he'd been entombed, and they rolled the rock back, he ran out, saw his shadow and ran back in?"

I take the Punxsutawney Jesus crack to mean that Churchill is up for a good mud-wrestling match, so I order fire-waters all round (he's a Jameson's Irish Whiskey man), and we hunker down for a three-hour duel. Churchill is plenty riled from a Charlie Brennan report the day before, which suggested that Churchill thinks he's Indian because his grandmother told him so on her deathbed. His grandmother did tell him, but not on her deathbed, he says. "How can you take something that goddamned simple," he asks, "to make it mean something other than what was said? My grandmother didn't die for another 20 years. How could she possibly have told me on her deathbed?"

Seeing he's a wee bit sensitive about his Indian identity, I go right for it, asking just how Indian he is. "I am not going to get into pet poodle pedigree," he says. "I've done this twice and I'm not doing it again. It is absolutely racially affrontive." But everybody wants to know, including his university, I respond. "And everybody can go f— themselves," he snaps. I point out to Churchill that among other numbers, he's already on record saying he's 1/16. "I'm on record, quote me on it," he says. "Fine, that's what I said, say it."

I point out that I am half-Italian. But if I were, say, 1/16 Italian and heading the National Italian American Foundation, wouldn't people think me some kind of poseur? "No," he says flatly. Natsu, who is Japanese-American, pipes up that there is a history of racist blood-quantum policy in America, and that such policies are "part of the attempt to exterminate American Indians." Of the attempts to question his identity, Churchill chimes in, "If I am not an Indian, the Indian will be gone." "Kill the Indian, save the man," seconds Natsu, bringing up the slogan of the old racist residential school system. "They are trying to kill the Indian in Ward Churchill."

Moving on to less controversial fare, I ask him about the discrepancies in his Vietnam record, in which he's made himself sound like a ground-pounding trigger-puller, while records suggest he drove a truck, and a résumé claims he worked as a public information specialist. "I performed infantry functions, I ended up in a transportation battalion," he rolls, before abruptly stopping. "Actually, I said I wasn't going to do this with anybody, and I'm not."

Why—it's under question? I ask.

"I don't care. Show me some possible relevance to it. . . . I'm not running for f—ing office. I don't have to vet my life back to potty training stage in order to be entitled."

I suggest that since people are alleging deception in several areas of his life, doesn't that go to his credibility as a scholar? "My academic work is subject to being assessed like any other academic work, and it doesn't matter if I think I'm goddamned Napoleon Bonaparte," he says. "This is not the *National F—ing Enquirer*, though it's been turned into that." He says no one contests that he's been in Vietnam, and no one contests that he's decorated (with a Cross of Gallantry and "this and that," he adds). I offer that when he waves the red cape, he shouldn't be surprised that people charge.

But Churchill sticks to his line. "I've made statements on Vietnam service, and I'm not going to parse and equivocate on them." I tell him that for someone who's not running for office, he sure sounds an awful lot like a politician, and that he's in violation of my 90 percent rule, which states that 90 percent of people who say they have no response to a charge are guilty as charged. Churchill vehemently disagrees, citing prisons, in which "90 percent of people don't belong there."

"You don't believe that," I scoff.

"Wanna start counting them?"

I don't. I'd rather order us more drinks.

As the night wears on, I feel transported back to my college days, when, on any given evening, you could end up in an off-campus bar with some batty radical professor,

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drinking, arguing, and throwing darts—at each other. Churchill and I, in repeated cycles, suffer through the classic three stages of happy hour: boozy bonhomie, injurious repartee, then schmaltzy reconciliation.

We find common ground on a few things. We agree that singer Townes Van Zandt is God, or was, until he drank himself to death. We resolve that Paul Newman characters make for good children's names (Luke, Hud, etc.). We concur that one of the most satisfying lines in the English language (Churchill's favorite) comes from Dashiell Hammett in *The Dain Curse*, when he describes a woman's face as a "dusky oval mask between black hat and black fur coat."

We disagree on nearly everything else, sometimes violently. He seems to think that there is no greater evil than American military exertion, and I make the case repeatedly that without it, the world would be lost. He recites his litany of massacres like Nagasaki. I point out that those *innocent* Japanese came from the same nation that killed 300,000 people at Nanking, forcing fathers to rape their own daughters, so that should make them Little Eichmanns, according to his own bent logic.

He insults my helter-skelter interview techniques, and questions whether I know anything about history. I insult his books, suggesting real scholars cite people other than Noam Chomsky and Ramsey Clark in their footnotes. Twice, Churchill storms out as if he's ended the interview (in fact, he just needed a Pall Mall). After growing frustrated at my increasingly frequent interjections, as I attempt to turn his dreary monologues into robust dialogues, he grabs my tape recorder once, and lunges for it another time, before I tell him to step back. When I follow him outside for a smoke break, he grows so frustrated at what he regards as my complete ignorance that he commands me to turn off my tape recorder, orders us off the record, and engages me in an exchange that journalistic convention forbids me to report, but which involves lots of colorful language on both sides.

We patch things up, for the most part. And by the end of the evening, I again posit to Churchill that he knows no transgression unless it's American transgression, that his calculus considers only the wars we've fought, but never the wars the world never had to fight as a result of American might. I tell him that communism, which set into motion so many of the American policies he detests, was no joke—it took the lives of 100 million people. At this, he blanches. "You don't really want to sit here and get into an arithmetical tally of who killed more people. Both have killed astronomical numbers of people in order to maintain themselves. Neither is defensible. The Soviet Union, however, has the virtue at this point of *not being here anymore*. The United States cannot claim that credit."

As I settle the check, and Churchill and his wife get up to leave, he says offhandedly, "Oh, and one more thing: F— you." I think he's joking, but in case he's not, on behalf of the little Eichmanns, I offer back with relish, "F— you too."

In the Berkeley student union the next afternoon, it's the usual fun and games, as Churchill speaks on a panel about academic freedom. Just outside the hall, a concessions kiosk does brisk business, pushing Churchill books and T-shirts with inscriptions such as "My heroes have always killed cowboys." *Revolutionary Worker* Communist newspapers are passed around among students, while McCarthyism is decried. During the Q&A after Churchill and several other professors speak, he is given a tongue-bath. One interrogator actually asks him to sign her term paper, which was written about the Churchill saga.

Afterwards, as Churchill disappears with six or seven television cameras pressing hard behind him, I step out into Sproul Plaza, where Mario Savio launched the Free Speech Movement in 1964. I head toward the GAP, which now sits adjacent to it, to check out the spring sales. But on my way I run into a lone Churchill protester, a Bay Area AIM activist named Earl Neconie. He's dressed in a Pendleton vest, a black Stetson with beaded headband, and a 2nd Marine Division pin. Beside him sits a placard that says "Ward Churchill speak with forked tongue."

I ask him if he'd encountered Churchill today. He says no, but he did around a decade ago when Churchill and he were at a tribunal, one of the many bloody battles in which their respective AIM organizations were trying to hash out something or other. He says he distinctly remembers Churchill, because he wasn't wearing any shoes. "Why are you barefoot?" Neconie asked. He shakes his head and laughs, remembering what Churchill said: "It's the Native in me." Neconie says he offered to buy Churchill some moccasins, before Indian-giving the offer with, "Oh wait, you're not an Indian."

I ask Neconie what his Indian name is. "Just Neconie," he responds. "It's an old Kiowa name. I don't have one like Standing Water, or Leaky Faucet, or anything like that." I ask him what he thinks of Churchill's Indian name, which is "Keezjunnahbeh," meaning "kind-hearted man."

Neconie shrugs. He hadn't heard of it. "But Bay Area Indians, we have our own name for him. We just call him Walking Eagle."

"Why?" I ask.

"Because," says Neconie, gathering up his placards, "a Walking Eagle is so full of s— that it can no longer fly." ♦

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Farewell to 'The Public Interest'

America's finest political quarterly closes its doors.

By David Skinner

An old wooden desk sits in my basement, on which I write and edit, with the washing machine on one side and the hot-water heater on the other. It's too square and bulky for a cubicle, a little too large to be carried straight through a doorway. It's also missing a couple of pulls—the screw-holes don't conform to today's sizes—and a few other parts cry out for minor repairs. But this piece of furniture was never destined for the showroom, though it did become a distinguished prop on history's stage—for on its surface Irving Kristol scribbled away as he, Daniel Bell, Nathan Glazer, and assorted friends and colleagues launched and steered the most important political quarterly of the last half-century, *The Public Interest*.

The *PI*, as we alumni call it, closes this month after 40 years of excellence. By the time I went to work there in 1996, most of its major battles had been fought and many of them won. Yet serious intellectual work was still under way. I remember entering the *PI* offices for my job interview and taking the place in like a farm boy seeing Paris for the first time. To my right, past several tall bookcases of back issues, sat a couple of pale young men, executive editor Adam Wolfson and managing editor Jason Bertsch, half-hidden in the piles of books, newspapers, and magazines. Straight ahead was my favorite living American intellectual, Irving Kristol, probably smoking a cigarette and talking to his broker on the phone. (These he did so regularly that he continues to do them in my mental picture of him.)

This place—the offices of the definitive anti-utopian policy journal—looked to me then like Paradise. My job interview, with the entire four-person staff, took place over lunch. Irving prodded with questions, clipped and staccato. "What are you reading?" I mentioned Robert Caro's book on Robert Moses, which started us talking about Rudy Giuliani and New York. "Where in Queens do you live?" "Douglaston," I said, which is a suburban neighborhood just inside the city line. "Farm country," said Irving.

Still, the conversation went well enough that I became convinced he was going to make me an offer on the spot. But as he paid for lunch, Irving grew suddenly restrained. "We'll let you know in seven to ten days." I was dismissed, like some petitioner at the Department of Motor Vehicles.

It turns out I had gotten off easy. After Adam Wolfson called and offered me the job, I learned that Irving usually asked applicants a two-parter. "What was your GPA?" he'd wonder. The applicant, inevitably the star of his Ivy League political science department, would just as inevitably be a hair shy of straight A's. Irving would then inquire, "Why not a 4.0?" I'm glad he didn't ask me, because I would have had to confess to a string of B's and, as to why, could only have pleaded laziness, perhaps a certain lack of aptitude, romantic distractions. On all these fronts, I was about to get an education.

My first task as assistant editor was to proofread Leon Kass's "The End of Courtship," a 9,000-word requiem for the practice of "wooing" and other traditional forms of gentlemanly conduct toward the fair sex. Not to diminish the many merits of this essay, but to me it was like taking a long car ride with a brilliant man who's definitely got my number (child of divorce, serial monogamist) and spends the whole trip imploring me to change.

Pop music critics nowadays like to praise "songs that changed your life" (in the words of Morrissey of The Smiths, an expert in his way, though not often cited in *The Public Interest*). I know the feeling, but in my case the songs were essays like Kass's, demanding that the reader face up to man's "shame at our needy incompleteness, unruly self-division, and finitude" and feel "awe before the eternal" and "hope in the self-transcending possibilities of children and a relationship to the divine." This really put a crimp in my plans for an extended and lively bachelorhood. "For a human being to treat sex as a desire like hunger—not to mention as sport—is then to live a

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deception." Even now that I am a husband and a father, when I reread this essay, I find myself thinking very hard about my responsibilities as a man. At the time, however, my reaction was quite different. I said to the managing editor, "After this, we should go out, find a bar, and meet some liberated chicks."

In mourning for *The Public Interest*, I have been hanging around its offices (now in downtown Washington, after a 1988 move from New York) and rereading early issues, trying to tease out the journal's editorial secret. Although its reputation rests largely on essays by social scientists exploring why the War on Poverty and other ambitious federal programs of the 1960s did not produce their intended results, the contents were always livelier than the sober, all-type covers suggested. The contributors were overwhelmingly academic, but the writing wasn't. It was direct, usually informal, sometimes journalistic, sometimes even literary.

This, perhaps, should not be surprising. Before starting *The Public Interest*, Irving Kristol coedited *Encounter* magazine with the English poet and critic Stephen Spender, creating (unwittingly with the help of CIA financing) one of the great intellectual journals of modern times. Kristol's bound volumes of *Encounter* are still in the *PI* offices. Leafing through the early issues, you can see America's most important postwar political essayists cohabiting on the table of contents with England's most illustrious novelists and poets. Next to Nathan Glazer and Daniel Bell and Irving Kristol sit the bylines of W.H. Auden, Robert Graves, P.G. Wodehouse, and Evelyn Waugh. Like *Encounter*, the early issues of *The Public Interest* suggest that one secret to being a great editor is remaining on friendly terms with great writers. The obviousness of this point, I hope, does not detract from its truthfulness.

The original coeditor of *The Public Interest*, Daniel Bell, was by the early '60s also an intellectual of some stature thanks to his 1959 collection of essays, *The End of Ideology*, which showed many of the qualities that would distinguish *The Public Interest*—and not merely the book's famous jettisoning of Marxism. Bell, a veteran of *Fortune* magazine, took a journalistic interest in the major news stories, to which he brought a highly analytic approach rarely seen outside the academy. In the 25-page "Crime as an American Way of Life," he debunked the myth of an organized crime syndicate controlling the vice trade nationwide (the Mafia) by closely examining the Kefauver Commission report and delving into the unique features of Italian immigration that contributed to the mythologizing of Italian-American criminality. A book review in issue ten of *The Public Interest* referred to postwar "academic sociology and its vulgate tongue, middle-brow journalism." Bell spoke both eloquently.

THE Public Interest

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The Great Automation Question
Robert M. Solow • *Robert L. Heilbroner*

Daniel P. Moynihan . The Professionalization of Reform
Robert A. Nisbet . . . . . The Permanent Professors
Daniel S. Greenberg . . The Myth of the Scientific Elite
Jacques Barzun . . . . . Art-by-Act-of-Congress
Martin Diamond . . . . . Conservatives, Liberals and The Constitution
Timothy Raison . . The British Debate the Welfare State
Daniel Bell . . . . . The Study of the Future

Why Are the Poor Still With Us?
Nathan Glazer • *Eveline M. Burns*

Kristol and Bell established an editorial system that, above all, let intellectuals be intellectuals: showy, disputatious, charming, brilliant. Daniel Patrick Moynihan could indulge in the first person, wax poetic here, wonkish there, then insert a long passage quoting himself, and get away with it. Never restrained, always winning, his essays in the early issues, like most everything else he penned, still read well.

But the true signature of the journal's tolerance for loose, complicated writing was in the authors' use of quotations. I do not mean the many lines of Machiavelli and Aristotle and Lord Salisbury that graced Irving Kristol's essays (and many others, too); rather, the generous use of documentary evidence, excerpts so long that in another publication they'd be mistaken for articles. The entire first page of an exceptional 1971 essay on the literature of women's lib by the English journalist Henry Fairlie is

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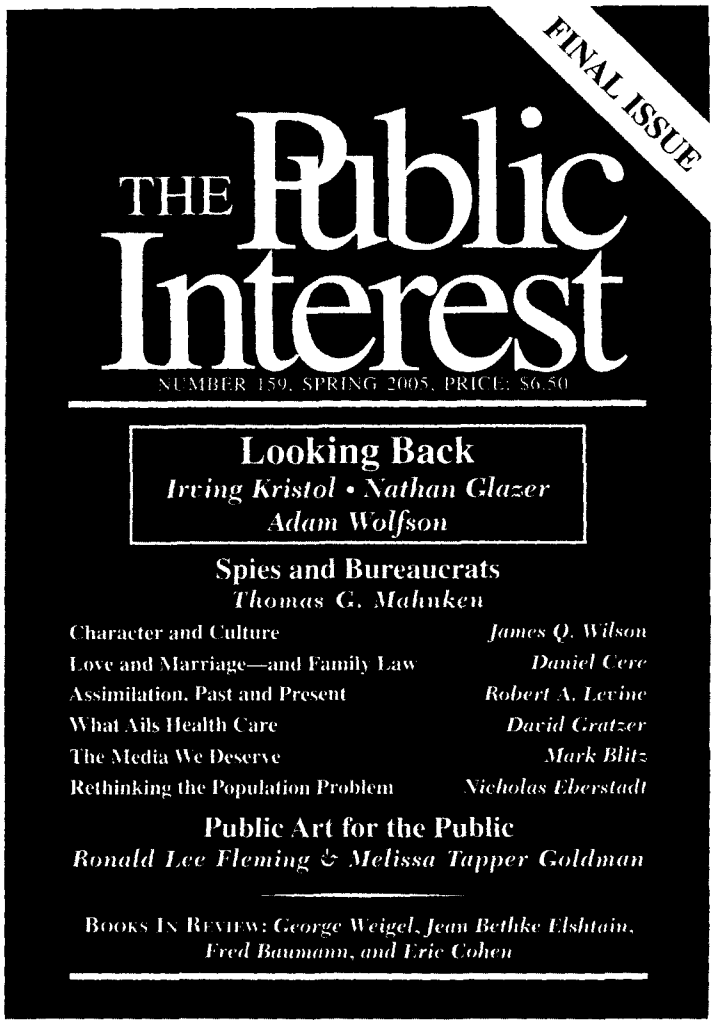

given over to a passage from one of Rilke's letters to a young poet, and almost the entire fourth page is occupied by two longish passages from first-person accounts of the women's struggle. The exceedingly sympathetic Fairlie concluded that women's liberation had already been granted (in the writings of Rousseau and elsewhere), while "the movement" actually denied what was truly feminine in women by demanding equality in all things.

Which brings up another distinguishing characteristic of the early *Public Interest*: a tolerance for eccentricity, especially in writers' choice of subjects. If Daniel Bell's interest in the Mafia was a little surprising, consider that the *PI*, while Bell was coeditor, published two additional essays on the subject, one an exceptional high-wire performance by Gordon Hawkins, the Australian criminologist, comparing arguments for the existence of God to arguments for the existence of the Mafia. "In the end it is difficult to resist the conclusion," wrote Hawkins, "that one is not dealing with an empirical phenomenon at all, but with an article of faith, transcending the contingent particularity of everyday experience and logically unassailable."

A 1966 essay on journalism by Kristol looked into how the legacy of muckraking and a devotion to amateurism undermined "the greatest newspaper ever," the *New York Times*. Reporters tended to have little expertise in the subjects they covered, while careers were made by splashy but ultimately trifling stories about public officials' minor or even nonexistent conflicts of interest. Editorials functioned as royal pronouncements, rarely condescending to bother with evidence or reasoning. More than its findings, many of which still ring true, the triumph of the essay lies in Kristol's amused and urbane tone: A copy should be sent to every right-wing crank who has ever used the acronyms MSM (mainstream media) or LMB (liberal media bias) to show how a sophisticated understanding of the media can coexist with trenchant criticism of their shortcomings.

The flip side of the journal's confidence in its contributors was a willingness to admit what they didn't know. This could take the form of plainspokenness about the poor state of knowledge; it could also take a pleasantly controversial form, as when an essay showed what others thought they knew but didn't. One of the greatest of this kind was a 1971 essay by Max Singer, "The Vitality of Mythical Numbers," which debunked an oft-repeated statistic exaggerating, by several times over, the dollar value of property stolen in New York City by heroin-users to fund their addiction. The author had no inside information, only a dollop of skepticism. He looked at what was known about the overall amount of property theft in the city, the size of the addict population, and several other factors, which made clear that the oft-repeated statistic was at least 10 times too large.

If big names are your thing, the early issues had enough to gild twice or thrice as many magazines. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Robert Nisbet, Jacques Barzun, Daniel Bell, and Nathan Glazer all appeared in the first issue. Perhaps my favorite essay in the debut issue is "Art-by-Act-of-Congress" by Jacques Barzun, which opens without any song-and-dance concerning its subject: "Three unrelated causes—the Cold War, the hunger of the mass media, and the temperament of the presidential Kennedys, husband and wife—have made art and culture in the United States for the first time a political concern."

A very high-minded and patriotic development this, says Barzun, except that "the arts in the West have been for over a hundred years antisocial and irreligious; they have incited to immorality, revolution, and nihilism; they seethe with hatred of the bourgeoisie, business, nor-

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mal appetites, and machine civilization. They war against everything that under the name of education the government already pays for: settled habits, decent thoughts, respect for the family, obedience to the law, and adherence to grammar, syntax, and democratic ideals." Much of Barzun's authority, of course, derived from the fact that he could not be accused of philistinism; would that it were so with many later critics of federal funding for the arts.

The magazine's instant flourishing was partly the result of a misplaced confidence in the eventual success of LBJ's Great Society, but this temporarily held together an unusually provocative assortment of thinkers. (And by flourishing, what I mean is influence and renown; "with a circulation of a few hundred, you could change the world," Kristol once said.) An article on the new meaning of property rights was authored by a then little-known Yale law professor named Charles A. Reich, who would go on to write *The Greening of America* a few years later. An early review by Robert Solow, who in 1987 would win the Nobel prize for economics, deprecated one of John Kenneth Galbraith's bestsellers as "a book for the dinner table, not for the desk." Galbraith returned fire with his own "review of a review," after which two subsequent and increasingly quirky counter-pieces followed.

Once the early results of the Great Society legislation arrived, however, the ship started to turn. A special 1972 issue noted "the growing disillusionment and despair of many of the social architects of these intervention programs and of the constituencies for which they spoke." Another major factor in the darkening mood among the editors and writers of *The Public Interest* was the student movement, coddled by an increasingly radical professoriate whose destructive powers were gravely noted in a special 1968 issue devoted to the universities.

Around this time, *The Public Interest*, fruitfully if not harmoniously, became a more philosophical journal, taking up issues of morality and religion that had been outside its purview at the start but would increasingly dominate its pages in the following decades. In a 1970 special issue on the state of capitalism, as Nathan Glazer notes in the final issue, both Daniel Bell and Irving Kristol, writing separately, worried that what remained of the moral capital accumulated over centuries of religious, traditional, and bourgeois living was not finally being frittered away by a proudly decadent younger generation and an adversarial intellectual culture. Shortly afterwards, Leon Kass contributed his first essay to the journal—"Making Babies," on the moral perils of laboratory-assisted reproduction—and Walter Berns his memorable (both for its own sake and because it appeared in a journal still understood to be run by thoughtful liberals) "Pornography vs. Democracy: The Case for Censorship." Wrote Berns:

> To live together requires rules and a governing of the passions, and those who are without shame will be unruly and unrulable; having lost the ability to restrain themselves by observing the rules they collectively give themselves, they will have to be ruled by others. . . . Such, indeed, was the argument made by political philosophers prior to the 20th century, when it was generally understood that democracy, more than any other form of government, required self-restraint, which it would inculcate through moral education and impose on itself through laws, including laws governing the manner of public amusements. It was the tyrant who could usually allow the people to indulge themselves.

Not coincidentally, the term *neoconservative* made its decisive entrance into the American political lexicon around this time, as an epithet coined by socialist writer Michael Harrington of *The Other America* fame to decry the political turn to the right taken by Kristol and many (though far from all) *Public Interest* contributors, among others. Daniel Bell, who would always call himself a democratic socialist, was succeeded by Nathan Glazer as coeditor in 1973. Kristol was the only one of his crowd to fully embrace the new label, though he was not the only one to support the reelection of Richard Nixon in 1972.

So went *The Public Interest*, and so went the country. But that is not quite the end of the story. When the magazine was launched in 1965, its editors joked to the *New York Times* that they were starting "a middle-aged magazine for middle-aged readers." They also ended up providing a halfway house for dozens and dozens of young assistants, who typically arrived fresh out of college and stayed a year or at most two before leaving for grad school, or government, or other jobs in journalism. In a 1985 issue marking the journal's 20th anniversary, Mark Lilla, then the 29-year-old associate editor, contributed an ambivalent essay chronicling the journal's shift from an eclectic public affairs quarterly in its first few years to become "the bible in matters of public policy" in the early '70s. Lilla, now a professor at the University of Chicago's Committee on Social Thought, noted that the journal's early consensus on ameliorative liberalism had slowly come apart, a process that reached its logical endpoint with "Charles Murray's 1982 article . . . arguing that the economic and social conditions of the poor had deteriorated badly *because* of the Great Society programs." That article became the basis for Murray's influential book *Losing Ground*, which made him for a while the nemesis of *PI* grandee Daniel Patrick Moynihan—whose later career in the Senate was spent fighting a rear-guard action against the Murray-inspired welfare reforms of the mid-'90s. This was shortly after

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Murray joined Moynihan and a dozen other eminences on the journal's board.

It was heady stuff for a 29-year-old to be explaining to sophisticated readers who had been there to see the whole thing for themselves, but Irving Kristol was always happy to throw his young charges into the deep end. Lilla jokingly calls it "scandalous" that he, a frustrated young writer, was empowered to edit so many distinguished contributors. He recalls the first piece he had his way with, an essay by a well-known political theorist that he tore into, rearranging its parts, rewriting some paragraphs. The political theorist called and asked for Kristol, who, after he put down the phone, told Lilla simply to restore every last comma. In my experience, too, the kids had free rein, but once a fight broke out, the author always won—so long as he was willing to go to the mat for his overwritten, pompous, out-of-date . . . oh, where was I?

When a reader becomes an editor, he assumes new powers and responsibilities. Instead of quietly complaining to himself that a piece provides too little information on this point or lacks clarity on that one, he must gather up his nerve and confront the author, even if the author is a towering eminence. Craig Turk, managing editor from 1994-95, was shocked when Irving told him—a guy whose only editing experience was marking up articles by Harvard undergraduates—to call George F. Will and put to him directly the questions Craig had after reading over Will's manuscript. Craig also remembers a film crew coming to the offices, working on *Arguing the World*—a 1998 PBS documentary chronicling the political formation of Kristol, Bell, Glazer, and Irving Howe at New York's City College in the late 1930s. The crew wanted to obtain footage of a typical day at the magazine, and wondered if they could shoot an editorial meeting. Only one problem: The *PI* didn't have editorial meetings. Since everyone sat in a single room within 10 feet of everyone else, if you had something to say, you just raised your voice.

The best that could be done under the circumstances was for Irving to ask Craig about some article "our friend" was writing about "you know." Irving didn't want to speak about any of his authors on camera. So Craig nodded and said something equally banal. None of which kept *Arguing the World* from becoming an "excellent doc," says Craig, who now makes his living writing for television. "I venture to guess that Irving never had an editorial meeting."

What everyone who's worked at *The Public Interest* talks about is what a privilege it was to hang around Irving Kristol. The job amounted to a kind of graduate school in life as a public intellectual. Irving would recommend books and offer career advice, often unsolicited and almost invariably sound. ("You want to go to law school? Why? Do you want to be a lawyer? No? Then don't go to law school.") The unpartitioned one-room office—which former executive editor Ben Wildavsky, now education editor of *U.S. News and World Report*, suggests was set up to look like the *Commentary* offices circa 1952 (the last year Kristol worked there)—allowed the young editors to eavesdrop on Irving's phone calls and talk with him about any number of issues. One former editor remembers the days when Irving would dictate letters to his longtime assistant Rita Lazzaro, which allowed the younger assistants to listen in as he debated various correspondents by mail. One of the big lessons offered was in "how to behave," says Wildavsky. I myself carry around in my head a sort of Irving Kristol tutorial on the proper conduct of an editor, whose main lessons are how to be modest without being meek, frank without being vulgar, and direct without being hostile—standards I've fallen short of only about a thousand times.

With all that the journal did for its apprentices, what did the apprentices do for it, besides occasionally annoy important contributors? I don't think it's too much to say they helped keep *The Public Interest* young. Or perhaps it's more accurate to say that they kept it middle-aged, at a golden mean between the editors and their assistants. Even as low man on the totem pole, you were always welcome to suggest stories and in many cases to contribute yourself. The assistants also functioned as a peanut gallery, grumbling when something obvious or boring in their view was under consideration or being published. And they kept a number of writers on their toes.

In 2002, one of the young guys became one of the old guys when Adam Wolfson, after several years of loyal service as executive editor, succeeded Irving and Nat as editor when they retired. If the journal's great historic moment was over, someone forgot to tell the guys at the office. Solid, and in several cases important, essays continued to be published, with an emphasis on culture and technology that had begun in the 1990s. One acquaintance, after reading a particularly fine recent issue, said, "Sheesh, I guess I don't need to worry about this magazine." Sadly, of course, he was wrong.

What I find most difficult about saying goodbye to a great intellectual journal whose offices I was fortunate enough to pass through is the feeling that I'll never be able to return the favor. The best one can do is to write and think well enough to brighten the little footnote one occupies in its great history. That, and provide a proper home for Irving Kristol's old desk. ♦

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Florenz Ziegfeld, in sunglasses

Everett Collection

Hollywood Means Business

Art, and commerce, make movies By Martha Bayles

Have you noticed that the silver screen is looking a bit tarnished these days? I'm not being metaphorical. If you are old enough to remember gazing up at immense, brilliant screens alive with crisp, clear images, then you are probably too old to enjoy complaining about the dingy screen flickering with blurred images that is the rule in today' s multiplex—because if you do bellyache, the reply, invariably, is that SukEmIn Theaters use only state-of-the-art technology, and that maybe you need to stop by the optometrist at the other end of the mall.

Take heart. The tarnish is real, according to Edward Jay Epstein. In lucid detail he explains how theaters cut costs by employing just one projectionist to run several screens, with the frequent result that neglected machines jam, allowing the projection lamp to burn a hole in the film. "To prevent such costly mishaps," Epstein writes, "multiplexes frequently have their projectionists slightly expand the gap between the gate that supports the film and the lamp. As a result . . . films are often shown slightly out of focus." Likewise, theater owners are loath to change projection bulbs, which cost $1,000 apiece. So even the sunniest sequences look like nuclear winter.

The Big Picture
The New Logic of Money and Power in Hollywood
by Edward Jay Epstein
Random House, 416 pp., $25.95

Does anyone care? Not really, says Epstein. Theater owners are in three different businesses: showing movies; showing advertisements—previews, which must be shown as part of their contract, don't generate any revenue—and selling popcorn and soft drinks. The only business that makes a profit for them is the third, so it makes sense to cater to teenage males, who gobble the most popcorn and slurp the most soda. This demographic is reputed not to give a hoot if the picture is fuzzy and dim, as long as they can see the explosions.

As for the good people in Hollywood, they are just as happy if the rest

Martha Bayles, who teaches in the Honors Program at Boston College, posts a blog called Serious Popcorn *at* www.artsjournal.com.

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Reuters / CORBIS / Fred Prouser

of us stay home and watch DVDs, because that is where they make their money. If nothing else, *The Big Picture* will cure you of ever confusing today's entertainment industry with the old pre-World War II studio system. Back then, the neighborhood theater was where the action was, with 90 million Americans ("about two-thirds of the ambulatory population") attending every week. The tickets cost a few dimes, and the program included a newsreel, a comedy short, a serial, a cartoon, a "B feature," and "the main attraction." These offerings all came from the same six or seven big studios, who also owned the theaters. So the profit (called "box office" because all those dimes got collected in a strongbox) went straight back to Hollywood.

The press still reports on "box office" as though it were profit, but as Epstein shows, "in 2003, a relatively good year, the six studios lost money on the worldwide theatrical release of almost all their titles." This is because, first, the moviegoing audience is much smaller than it used to be: In 1957 Americans bought 4.7 billion tickets; in 2003 they bought 1.57 billion. Second, the audience for a given film must now be "created": In addition to the cost of production (which now averages about $63.8 million) and of prints for theaters ($4.2 million), the studio must spend $34.8 million for advertising. After the ritual of theatrical release, the real profits begin to flow: from foreign release (also something of a ritual), licensing to cable and satellite TV (pay dirt), video rental (dwindling), DVD sales (growing), related merchandise like soundtracks, toys, and games (double pay dirt), theme parks (requires planning ahead), and finally, sequels (nice work if you can get it).

The reader will catch the drift. The most lucrative movies are those that fire on all seven cylinders. Ordinary mortals call these "blockbusters," a term derived from the wonderful world of munitions. But the industry calls them "locomotives," because they drag a lot of dead weight behind them. Without gigantic, repeatable successes like *Indiana Jones*, *Terminator*, *Die Hard*, *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, *Back to the Future*, *Batman*, *Harry Potter*, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *Toy Story*, *Finding Nemo*, and *Shrek* to keep them in the black, the six major studios would have run into the red 30 years ago.

Of course, in Hollywood, distinguishing between the red and the black is itself an art form. The industry's tortuous "logic of money and power" has been explored by a number of recent books, some by insiders like David Puttnam, others by outsiders who, like Epstein, managed to worm their way in. What one learns from these investigations is that the deepest, darkest secrets in Tinseltown have nothing to do with sex, drugs, blasphemy, or politics, and everything to do with money. Quoting David O. Selznick's famous quip that Hollywood was "built on phony accounting," Epstein shares recipe upon recipe for cooking the books—and, after comparing the sharp practices of the Walt Disney Company to those of Enron and WorldCom, delivers one of his few laugh lines: "Clearly, Mickey's handlers had been to business school."

Naturally, one is shocked, shocked, to learn all this. At a certain point, though, one wants to know why it matters. The industry gets rich from licensing and merchandise now, instead of from theatrical release. The accountants sauté the books now, instead of broiling them. But what does this say about the movies themselves? Are they better or worse because of these changes? Or just different?

One of the biggest differences between old and new Hollywood has to do with censorship. Epstein explains how, in the old days, the Motion Picture Association of America and the Motion Picture Export Association created the Hays Office to prevent what one Paramount executive called a "race to the bottom" involving an ever-increasing investment in "salacious or controversial subjects." This self-imposed censorship was also seen as good for business because it "headed off the possibility of foreign or independent competitors distributing such fare to American theaters."

During the 1960s and '70s, the demise of the Hays Office, combined with the liberationist mood of the time, led to a no-holds-barred race to a bottom that was not only salacious and controversial, but also thoroughly spattered with fake blood. Many people believe that this race is still being run. But as Epstein notes, the huge popularity of the DVD is starting to slow its pace. Because DVDs are so cheap to produce, they are easier to sell than videotapes (which are more profitable as rentals). But with the shift toward sales, new pressures have appeared. Mega-retailers like Wal-Mart prefer to sell movies it considers family-friendly. So, quite often, movies are re-edited to meet this requirement. (This is basically what Mel Gibson just did with *The Passion of the Christ*.) For the same reason, mass merchandisers like McDonald's prefer to sell product tie-ins that do not frighten little children—which means more Spider Man vs. Green Goblin Dioramas and fewer Texas Chainsaw Massacre Leatherface String Light Sets.

At this juncture, questions abound. Are these new pressures good or bad for the movies? It's hard to imagine even Wal-Mart imposing the kind of rules that made the Hays Office ridiculous, such as requiring married couples to be depicted sleeping in twin beds. But does freedom always improve art?

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Or to put it more provocatively, does censorship always hurt it? What is the proper place of public morality in popular art? Is it different from the place of morality in elite art? What is the appropriate standard by which to judge Hollywood movies?

Epstein provides no answers to these questions, which would be okay if he made it clear from the start that they were beyond the scope of his book. But he does no such thing. On the contrary, he spends the last five chapters whipping up a veritable cloud of aesthetic, moral, and political issues that he is plainly ill-equipped to deal with.

Reuters / CORBIS / Sam Mircovich

Michael Eisner

I say ill-equipped because, while Epstein's authorial stance is carefully neutral, one bias stands out very clearly: He is not a moviegoer. To illustrate his various points he keeps citing the same four films: *Terminator 3*, *Gone in 60 Seconds*, *Natural Born Killers*, and *The Bourne Identity*. None of these is memorable—except, perhaps, *Natural Born Killers*, which is memorable the way root canal work is memorable—but each has left a paper trail that Epstein finds useful. This poverty of reference is not a problem as long as the topic is finance, or the steps by which a movie is pitched, developed, "green-lighted," prepped, photographed, and assembled by armies of highly specialized technicians. (After all, the book *Picture*, Lillian Ross's classic study of how movies were made back in 1951, was based on a single film, MGM's *The Red Badge of Courage*.)

But when the topic is the movies themselves, it would behoove one to know a little bit about . . . well, the movies themselves. To know, for example, that *Men in Black I* and *II* were not serious treatments of "[Steven] Spielberg's premise . . . that the government systematically lies about disturbing phenomena to avoid panicking its citizenry" but hilarious spoofs of that premise, long after it became a cliché. (My favorite line: "No, ma'am. We at the FBI do not have a sense of humor that we are aware of.") But let us return to the DVD. Epstein draws a wonderfully clear diagram [illegible] called the cash-flow [illegible] lywood. It is clear because he organizes this part of the book into brief, compulsively readable stories about the people, organizations, and inventions that have shaped the entertainment industry over the past half century. One story tells how Steve Ross of Time Warner and Akio Morita of Sony resolved a lawsuit over a relatively minor matter (Sony's hiring away of two Time Warner executives) in such a manner as to serve a much larger purpose, that of allowing both behemoths to pursue their interest developing the DVD. The result could not have been happier: one company selling billions of shiny little discs, and the other selling millions of sleek machines on which to play them—all without violating the antitrust law!

But like the new censorship, the new technology raises the quality question. The advent of the DVD has paralleled that of the CD. Not only has it influenced the packaging of new material, it has stimulated the re-packaging of old. We may regard with mixed feelings the prospect of buying our favorite childhood TV shows in immaculate-looking boxed sets, but that is only the tip of the marketing iceberg. The DVD is making whole libraries of movies as available and accessible as the paperback made w[illegible] ies o[illegible] Will this help to [illegible] the public about the history of film, thereby developing its taste and improving quality overall? Or will it degrade taste by reducing the experience of watching a movie to something you can do any time, anywhere, on your ever-miniaturizing laptop? (*Lawrence of Arabia* . . . Coming soon to a video phone near you!)

Granted, it is probably too soon to assess the aesthetic impact of the DVD—not to mention the whole "digital revolution" of which the DVD is but the leading edge. But Epstein's reluctance to address the quality issue also hobbles his attempts to come to grips with the enormous change that stands at the heart of his study: the one that occurred in the late 1940s and early 1950s, when the power in Hollywood shifted away from the moguls who founded the studios and toward the top stars, the top directors, and the agents who perfected that power in the new "art of the deal."

Again, Epstein tells some great stories. His potted biography of Lew Wasserman leaves no doubt as to who was the key player in this transfer of power. And he re-roasts some fine old chestnuts about the sore oppression of talented people under the moguls. For instance, he recalls the famous 1939 court case that forced Bette Davis to knuckle under to Jack and Harry

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Lew Wasserman

CORBIS / Rose Prouser

Warner, as well as the 1944 case that struck down an extension clause in Olivia de Havilland's contract on the grounds that it amounted to "involuntary servitude."

Given how Epstein narrates this sea change, the reader might expect him to conclude that movies are the better for it. Borrowing from Neal Gabler's classic *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood*, he portrays the studio heads as concerned less with art than with avoiding controversy, keeping the business afloat, and (a distant third) winning social acceptance from the still anti-Semitic American mainstream. Summarizing these pressures, he writes that they "reduced entertainment to a product based not on aesthetics but on the abacus of cost efficiency."

So the product is now based on aesthetics because, instead of Adolph Zukor, Carl Laemmle, William Fox, the brothers Warner, Louis B. Mayer, Harry Cohn, and Darryl Zanuck, the people in charge are now Steven Spielberg, Tom Hanks, Martin Scorsese, Robert DeNiro, and Tom Cruise? It is important to ask this question in a neutral tone that does not elevate one list of names over the other, because it is a real question, and the answer is far from obvious. Indeed, it may be that aesthetic considerations have weighed the same in both eras—which is to say, not as much as we might like, but not nothing, either. As Epstein describes the actual work of making movies, his peculiar avoidance of aesthetic questions grows even more peculiar.

Consider the section called "The Value of Pseudoacting." Here Epstein revives the hoary cliché that film acting is child's play compared with the serious business of performing on stage. The example he gives is of Patrick Stewart, who plays Captain Jean-Luc Picard in the *Star Trek* movies. With a faint but unmistakable air of condescension, Epstein informs us that "Stewart, his Hollywood success notwithstanding, described himself as first and foremost a stage actor." Epstein then regales us with what we already know—namely, that film acting involves endless retakes of scenes that are never done in sequence, often with stand-ins and other illusion-destroying artifices—with the clear intention of showing how pathetic it is for a Hollywood actor like Stewart to "portray their acting as a form of spontaneous art."

Unfortunately, this dismissal of Stewart's acting, and of film acting in general, is not helped by Epstein's evident ignorance of Stewart's career, which began in the fabled repertory theaters of Lincoln and Manchester, followed by a world tour with the Old Vic Company, a 27-year association with the Royal Shakespeare Company, and a sojourn at the Royal National Theater before joining the cast of the new *Star Trek* TV series in the mid-1980s. Movie acting is for Patrick Stewart what golf is to the folks in Sun City. But that doesn't mean there's no skill involved.

Speaking of the theater, it might be worth taking a moment to consider how Epstein's mode of analysis would illuminate that realm. The theater industry, if you'll pardon the expression, is a lot older than the movie industry. But think of all the regime changes it has gone through. In ancient Greece, it was part of a religious festival sponsored by aristocratic citizens who competed fiercely for performance spots and prizes. In Rome, it was the plaything of plutocrats, who cared more about the lavish special effects than about the drama (sound familiar?). In ninth-century Europe, plays were performed in church by priests. In Renaissance Italy, there was the elegant proscenium of Aleotti and the funky *commedia dell'arte* of the streets. In Elizabethan England, the Globe Theater was run as a profit-making venture by entrepreneurial actors and other investors. The French bourgeoisie plunked down good francs to see realistic drama. And in spite of themselves, the Communists gave the world Bertolt Brecht and the post-Revolution Moscow Art Theater. What is the point? To quote one of those entrepreneurial actors, "The play's the thing." Under all of these regimes, the theater has been dominated by a lot of junk. (Even the Globe Theater featured bear-baiting on off nights.) But in most eras, the junk has been punctuated by a few great works, which is why we bother to pay attention at all.

It's the same with movies. The studio system produced some beautiful movies, often against steep odds. It also produced some colossal duds, under ideal conditions. And so does the present regime. Regardless of which variable you pick—censorship, technology, changing modes and manners of work, shifting calculations of audience taste—they all coexist with the creation of both good and bad work. One simply cannot judge on these external bases.

In the end, Epstein takes refuge in politics, which, when it comes to the arts, is definitely the refuge of scoundrels. On the left, the cliché is that the 30-year reign of the blockbuster is living proof that Marx and Gramsci were right: Movies are not works of art (or even craft) but excrescences produced by multinational capitalism to reinforce its hegemonic constructed consciousness.

Ask a professor of film studies what Hollywood stands for these days, and you'll be lectured at length

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about how the movies have retreated from the political engagement of the late 1960s and '70s into reactionary fantasies of American power and glory, albeit transposed into unrealistic settings. This is pretty tiresome, but so is the cliché, still being recycled on the right, that movies are nothing but a 1960s-style culture war being waged by all those left-liberals in Hollywood. Ask a talk radio pundit what Hollywood stands for these days, and you'll be harangued about scurrilous attacks on every established institution in America, from religion to business, the military, and (maybe) the government. This argument was set forth most memorably by Ben Stein in the late 1970s, and it still makes enough intuitive sense for Epstein to adopt it as the frame of his "big picture." Unfortunately, the frame no longer fits.

I hate to sound like a professor of film studies, but among other things, this particular critique fails to tell us anything about the blockbuster phenomenon. Nor does it do much to explain the current rift in Hollywood, between high-minded left-liberals who still struggle to enlighten the public with politically tendentious movies, and low-minded apolitical types who get rich making movies as stupid as they are ethically challenged. It is especially ironic to read Epstein's poker-faced account of how the villains in Hollywood movies are always "murderous, duplicitous, cynical businessmen" and "greedy executives of multinational corporations."

Here again, he is echoing Ben Stein. But a better source might be his own book, which devotes 300 pages to describing the not murderous, (usually) but definitely duplicitous, cynical, and greedy multinational corporations to whom he gives the ominous-sounding title, "the sexopoly." Can't you just imagine the trailer? *An honest scholar . . . seeking the truth. . . . But when you mess with the Sexopoly, watch out. . . . Before you know it, you're playing a deadly game of hide-and-seek, desperately trying to save your own thesis. . . . Licensed action figures on sale at Borders bookstores everywhere.* ♦

Losing Big

A conspiracy so immense—and so unsuccessful.

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

The Vast Left Wing Conspiracy
The Untold Story of How Democratic Operatives, Eccentric Billionaires, Liberal Activists, and Assorted Celebrities Tried to Bring Down a President—and Why They'll Try Even Harder Next Time
by Byron York
Crown, 288 pp., $26.95

The International Code of Ethics in Book Reviewing, which has been ratified by every country except Great Britain, requires that I open this review by declaring that I have been a friend of Byron York for several years. But I've been an admirer for many more. We met sometime in the early 1990s, when a television producer lassoed the two of us together, along with several other downy-cheeked journalists, and pitched a half-baked idea for a talk show about politics.

The would-be producer was silly in the way TV people uniquely are, insecure and full of himself and clueless all at once. Over lunch, he unfurled one tasteless idea after another. As the rest of us sank deeper into the banquette, York went the other way, inching to the edge of his seat and pelting the producer with questions, honed to perfection and tipped with poison, until the idiocy of the pitch was transparent even to the man who was making it. I don't want to make the conversation seem more violent than it was. York never dropped his customary Southern gentility (he grew up in Alabama or Mississippi or someplace similar). But it is true that the show never made it to broadcast, and his polite but relentless skepticism may have had something to do with it—just one more debt our country owes to Byron York.

After that, I kept an eye out for York's byline, as discerning readers have done for more than a decade, through the Clinton interregnum and on into the epoch of Bush the Younger. Today he is White House correspondent for *National Review* and a columnist for *The Hill*. What sets him apart from most conservative political writers is what I saw on display at lunch that day nearly 15 years ago: He shares the polemicist's taste for combat, but he has an even larger appetite for straight information, along with the energy and good sense to dig out facts for himself. He's a reporter, in other words, and a nervy one, unburdened with any pronounced ideological bias beyond the reporter's general aversion to claptrap. He works in good faith and it shows in his stories.

York's first book—I'm assuming he's just getting started—is a comprehensive account of a great political mystery: How was it that the left wing in the United States managed to raise more money, energize more activists, assemble more grass-roots networks, command more media attention, and receive more votes than at any other time in its history—and yet was still capable of losing the 2004 presidential election? Apparently it was harder than it looked. The feat required the marvels of high technology, the willful delusions of ideologues, the vanities of show biz, and, most of all, the unintended consequences of campaign finance reform.

It required, in particular, George Soros, the Hungarian-born currency trader who sank nearly $30 million of his $7 billion fortune into the cause of

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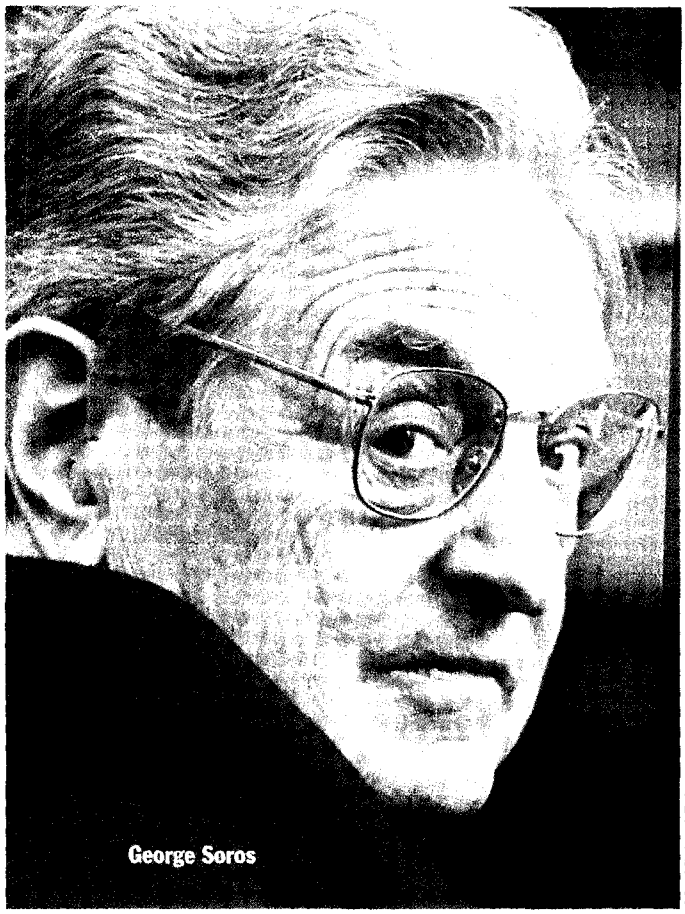

George Soros

AP / Michael Euler

dethroning George W. Bush. Like many financial geniuses, Soros turned out to be an idiot savant: sharp as a Ginsu knife when it came to anticipating capital flows, but a dull blade in other matters of the mind, and especially in reading the political sentiments of the American public. With his stammering circumlocutions and air of vague befuddlement, he appeared in public as a profoundly unimpressive man; a Soros speech could make a Bush press conference sound like Olivier reciting *Paradise Lost.*

York is unkind enough to quote some of the poor billionaire's utterances word for word. The *uhs* and *ums* and long, mysterious silences usually rendered him impossible to follow, yet understanding him was even more unsettling. Soros had a weakness for conspiracy theories and a melodramatic view of geopolitics in which, more often than not, the United States was cast as Snidely Whiplash. He really seemed to believe, for example, that the Abu Ghraib prison scandal stood as a moral parallel to the September 11 terrorist attacks.

Despite his peculiarities, Soros became the most consequential figure on the left. "More than any other person," York writes, "Soros remade politics in 2004; without him, the Vast Left Wing Conspiracy would not have been vast at all." (York's title, by the way, is meant to be ironic; he doesn't have a weakness for conspiracy theories.) Of course, it's a problem for a mainstream political party when the biggest donor on its side of the ideological divide is a wack job. But Democrats had only themselves to blame. Soros's influence, along with that of other unhinged rich guys like the movie producer Stephen Bing (a $13 million donor) and the insurance tycoon Peter Lewis ($23 million), were a direct, if unintended, consequence of the McCain-Feingold campaign finance law.

Democrats had been agitating for the law for years, and they got their wish in 2002, when Bush agreed to sign whatever variant of the bill happened to drop on his desk. The goal of McCain-Feingold, said reformers, was to curtail the role of "big money in politics." Its actual effect was more limited: It curtailed the role of big money in *political parties* by severely restricting the amount of money fat felines like Soros and Bing could donate to them.

And so, in accordance with the laws of hydraulics, the big money was channeled elsewhere, and the story of the Vast Left Wing Conspiracy is to a large extent the story of how all that cash was commandeered by fringe groups on the left.

It's a truism with which political scientists have been boring us for years: Parties moderate political passions. They discipline true believers by drawing them into a nationwide organization that is designed to appeal to the country's political center. Without that moderating influence, the money from donors like Soros went instead to groups like MoveOn.org and America Coming Together and the Media Fund, ideological boot camps run by radicals who had deluded themselves into believing that voters hated Bush as much as they did. They spent their money accordingly—on ads, for example, that tried to prove Bush had gone AWOL from the Texas Air National Guard, and on high-tech voter-contact networks that ignored swing voters and independents altogether. The net effect of their efforts may have been to Bush's favor.

"A number of the groups in the Vast Left Wing Conspiracy," writes York, "were closed loops: circles of like-minded people who appealed almost exclusively to other like-minded people, but who at the same time exhorted one another into thinking that their appeal stretched far beyond the circle." It's possible that the party's pros would have made the same mistake to the same impressive degree. But not likely.

York's book comes close to being definitive—beautifully written, exhaustively reported, seamlessly woven into a narrative that compels your attention from beginning to end. Why, it's unputdownable! (The International Code allows one use of this word per review.) Yet York is as interested in the future as in the past. The clumsiness of the organizations that Soros and his colleagues created was the clumsiness of the beginner. They're not going to be this delusional, or inept, forever. And they have a useful precedent to follow.

"Consider the remarkable transformation of the conservative movement in recent decades," York writes. "Compared to the Left today, the conservative movement in the 1960s was much further removed from power, much less organized, and not nearly as well financed. . . . The Left could rebound much more quickly than the Right did."

You should read York's book if you want to know what happened in the last presidential election. More important, you should read it if you want to know what to look for in the next. ♦

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Brothers Under the Skin

Divided by dogma, Stalin and Hitler were united by terror. BY HENRIK BERING

One of the most ghoulish reminiscences of life at Stalin's court was provided by the old Polish Communist security chief Jakob Berman. He recalled late-night banquets in the Kremlin lasting till four in the morning, where exquisite food and drink—roast bear, pepper vodka, and sweet Georgian wines—were served, and where the drunken participants would dance the night away with Stalin manning the gramophone.

The Dictators
Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Russia
by Richard Overy
W.W. Norton, 848 pp., $35

On one occasion, Berman had slow-waltzed with Molotov, the Soviet foreign minister. "You surely mean Mrs. Molotov," asked the interviewer, Polish journalist Teresa Toranska. "No. Mrs. Molotov was in a labor camp," Berman answered matter-of-factly, adding that in the waltz he played the part of the lady, with Molotov leading. Throughout the night, Stalin was sticking to his DJ duties, while carefully watching everybody. When asked if they enjoyed themselves, Berman gave a qualified assent: "Yes, it was pleasant," he said, "but *with an inner tension.*"

No kidding.

The scene of this Monster Mash is included in Simon Sebag Montefiore's bestselling biography from last year, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar.* Montefiore benefited greatly from the partial opening of the Russian State Archives in 1999: We meet Stalin humiliating his minions, tapping his pipe out on Nikita Khrushchev's bald pate and asking if it is hollow, Stalin pruning his roses, Stalin signing death warrants, Stalin singing traditional Russian folk songs, and Stalin reassuring everybody that "life has become merrier, comrades, life has become better." A succession of secret police bosses guard his throne: Yagoda, who collected bullets dug out of his victims' brains and smoked pipes shaped like genitalia; the bisexual dwarf Yezhov, who, when not torturing people, was arranging flatulence contests among the commissars; and, of course, the unspeakable Beria, cruising the streets in his armored black Packard in search of young girls to rape.

Stalin is no longer the gray figure of the past, an abstract, inscrutable sphinx, but (in terms of colorfulness) at last catching up with his old enemy, Hitler, who has long had a whole historical cottage industry devoted to him.

The problem with focusing narrowly on the personalities of these people is that the reader invariably starts wondering how such freaks and lowlifes could ever have obtained power in the first place. The point is that these were not just two-bit gangsters, but men of vast ambition, messiahs with a program. To understand their success, you need more of the background—political, economic, and intellectual—that allowed them to claw their way to the top and to stay there.

This is what Richard Overy's massive study sets out to provide. Overy is professor of history at King's College London. Unlike Alan Bullock's *Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives* (1991), Overy's book is not biography in the traditional sense. It is more a series of comparative essays on key aspects of the dictatorships—their cult of personality, their legal, economic, and cultural policies, their war-fighting capabilities, and their camp systems—while remaining saturated with the spirit of their creators. These were very personal dictatorships, created in the image of their makers.

In the process, Overy pays close attention to the writings of both. Many Western observers have a tendency to dismiss such writings as mostly empty rhetoric and mad rantings, since no serious person could hold such views. Unfortunately, they often do, whether it be a Hitler or Stalin, a Mao Zedong, Ayatollah Khomeini, or Pol Pot. "In each dictatorship," Overy notes, "a unique moral universe was constructed to justify and explain its actions. The moral plane was not an irrelevance, but a key battleground." We ignore such writings at our peril.

There were, of course, obvious differences in character and style between the two men. Hitler was a grand visionary, a gambler and dreamer, who considered himself an artist. Stalin was a careful, opportunistic schemer. Hitler was more distant and formal, while Stalin liked posing as the reassuring uncle, with his pipe and moustache, a man "upon whose knee a child would like to sit," in the phrase of the onetime American ambassador to the Soviet Union, Joseph Davies.

Hitler enjoyed performing in front of huge audiences; Stalin seldom appeared in public. As orators, Hitler would tear off into a primal scream, while Stalin was a slow and deliberate speaker. Occasionally, Stalin would display a certain mocking hangman's humor, such as when, in a newspaper article, he casually dismissed the millions of famine deaths in the Ukraine as having been caused by excessive zeal among officials who were "dizzy with success."

Likewise, there were fundamental differences in the ideology of the two utopias: One was universal in its ambitions on behalf of the working class, while the other was for Germans only—which explains why you will find apologists for communism at West-

Henrik Bering is a journalist and critic.

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The Hitler-Stalin pact, 1939

CORBIS

ern universities to this day. But though different in style and ideology, Stalin and Hitler were kindred spirits, and their states were kindred states. Visiting Berlin in 1940, a Soviet interpreter named Valentin Berezhkov was struck by how much he recognized from home: "The same kind of worship of the leader, the same kind of mass rallies, similar art and architecture."

Both leaders came from deprived backgrounds, with enormous chips on their shoulders, and both shared a profound sense of destiny. They saw themselves as the embodiment of their people: Hitler as the redeemer of the German nation, Stalin as the guardian of Lenin's revolutionary legacy. Both used scientific argument to legitimize their regimes. Hitler built on Darwin and Nietzsche and the race theories of social biologists like Ernst Haeckel and Ludwig Woltmann and saw the world's races engaged in a ruthless struggle for survival, with the Aryans representing the highest stage of evolution. Stalin built on Hegel and Marx, seeing the working class as representing the apex of historical achievement. To this was added the pseudoscience of geneticist Trofim Lysenko, who preached the primacy of the environment over heredity, and thereby provided the theoretical basis for that wonder of human engineering, the New Soviet Man.

In making their cases, both resorted to casuistry. They would dismiss the humanist ideal of objectivity as an absurd bourgeois concept, while claiming that they represented a moral absolute: Stalin spoke of "the laws of history" and Hitler talked of "nature's stern and rigid laws." Both saw victory as inevitable.

Terror is the defining characteristic of the modern totalitarian state. In both dictatorships, Overy carefully traces the rhetoric of parasites and disease, of opposition being seen as illnesses in the body politic, against which radical measures must be taken. The Kulaks and Jews were cancers that had to be excised. The judicial systems in these states existed, Overy notes, "not to protect the individual from the state, but to protect the state from the individual." As Stalin so trenchantly put it, "Death solves all problems. No man, no problem." The Soviets were generally more careful than the Nazis in keeping up appearances, going through the motions of bogus confessions and trials.

The camps were the logical outcome of both systems. But in the Soviet Union, the camps had an economic rationale, since they were designed to get labor out of the inmates, and thereby support the regime. In the Soviet camps, there was a 40 percent chance of getting out alive; in the Nazi slave labor camp system, only 14 percent emerged. Of course, the extermination camps had no kind of economic logic whatsoever, as they worked against German war aims by diverting resources and tying up railway lines. The attempt to exterminate a whole people is what makes Hitler unique.

The most troubling question remains why so few resisted. Of course, there was the fear factor. As a German Social Democrat notes in the book, "It is difficult to be brave every day." But fear alone does not suffice as a reason. The unpleasant truth is that both systems enjoyed wide support. According to Overy, "neither system can be properly understood without accepting this conclusion." After World War I, the populations of Germany and Russia had endured chaos, deprivation, and civil war. They longed for salvation, order, and a strong hand.

Accordingly, there was never any shortage of informers in either system. Overy relates that two-thirds of the cases that landed on the Gestapo's desk did so through help from the public. And though there were several attempts on Lenin's life—including one man who wanted to take a belated potshot at his corpse in the mausoleum—nobody tried to assassinate Stalin. When he died in 1953 Stalin was genuinely mourned by millions who saw him as the man who had industrialized Russia and had saved it during World War II.

In passing judgment on the inhabitants of totalitarian systems, it is always easy to stand on the moral high plain. The horrible thing about effective dictatorships is that they seek to implicate everyone: Living in them, people make moral compromises, big or small—which is what proves so complicated when it comes to reestablishing just government afterwards. ♦

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The Standard Reader

Books in Brief

***The Cube and the Cathedral: Europe, America, and Politics Without God* by George Weigel (Basic, 202 pp., $23)** George Weigel, the biographer of Pope John Paul II, has written a finely honed reflection on post-Christian Europe—how it got that way, why it matters, and what it might portend. The backdrop is Europe's startling demographic decline, which Muslim immigrants are more than willing to reverse. The event around which Weigel's argument crystallizes is the deliberate exclusion from the new European constitution of any acknowledgment of the continent's Christian heritage.

Why this flight from historical truth? How is it that the present generation of European statesmen came to see their project in aggressively secular terms? In this, they are unlike the founding fathers of the E.U. itself—Konrad Adenauer, Alcide de Gasperi, Robert Schumann, Jean Monnet, serious Catholics all.

Weigel contemplates the sheer oddness of it: Modern Europeans have made a religion of anti-fascism; revulsion at the Holocaust drives their commitment to tolerance, human rights, and peaceful negotiation. Yet they see Christianity as threatening—though the Holocaust and the Gulag, like the Terror of the French Revolution, were the product of godless ideologies, while the biblical religions teach the dignity of persons made in the image of God.

Weigel digs back to the 19th century antecedents of contemporary "Christophobia" (a provocative usage he adopts from the Jewish scholar Joseph Weiler) and finds—who else?—Nietzsche, glorifying violence and the will to power. And he digs much further, to reconstruct in broad strokes the Christian contribution to the emergence of polities respectful of citizens' rights. He starts at the beginning, when Christians denied that Caesar was God, and "an antitotalitarian vaccine was injected into Europe's civilizational bloodstream."

Christians have often failed to live up to their creed, and Weigel concedes that Rome was slow to articulate, from within its own premises, "a persuasive, compelling case for democracy." But with Vatican II and the papacy of John Paul II, it has now done so. Whether the generation inspired by John Paul will spur a Christian revival or witness the progressive Islamicization of Western Europe may be the question on which hangs the future of liberty in Europe.

—Claudia Winkler

***Fidel: Hollywood's Favorite Tyrant* by Humberto E. Fontova (Regnery, 229 pp., $27.95)** Fidel Castro turns 79 this August. His revolution, meanwhile, clocks in at over 46 years in the making. Which means Castro has ruled the roost in Cuba for most of his adult life. And what a life it's been. How the *lider maximo* of a small Caribbean island grew to wreak such havoc on America, the world, and—above all—the Cuban people is a brutally tragic tale.

But it's a tale worth telling. In *Fidel*, Humberto E. Fontova proves up to the task. A gifted polemicist, he pulls no punches in rehashing Castro's legacy of plunder, torture, murder, and terrorism. Along the way, Fontova dispels countless popular myths about the history of Cuba and U.S. foreign policy. He knows Cuba well. Fontova fled the island with his parents—to escape Castroite persecution—when he was 7.

Now an acclaimed author, he offers a treasure chest of underreported Cuba nuggets. For instance, Fontova recounts the saga of ex-Black Panther Garland Grant, who hijacked a plane to Cuba in 1971 and wound up in Castro's prison system, where the guards beat him so badly he lost an eye. Grant later told an AP reporter there was more racism in Communist Cuba "than in the worst parts of Mississippi." He was "living like a dog in Cuba," and wanted only "to get back to the United States."

And did you know FBI agents foiled a Castro-backed terror plot to bomb subways and other New York City landmarks in November 1962? Probably not. So much about Castro's Cuba is shrouded by misinformation. Luckily, for those who are interested, we now have Fontova's highly readable new volume. He's done a great service for liberty, justice, and truth—all of which remain painfully absent from his native land.

—Duncan Currie

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Parody

A San Diego woman has sued major cereal makers to stop them from advertising their "low sugar" cereals as healthier alternatives to their full-sugar varieties. Plaintiff Jennifer Hardee said in the lawsuit that she bought low-sugar versions of Kraft's Fruity Pebbles, Kellogg's Frosted Flakes and General Mills' Cocoa Puffs, among others, because she assumed they were healthier for her children. —News item

Family Menu
HEALTH Week

	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
TUES.	DIET CEREAL Ingredients: - 1 quart Kellogg's Extra-lo-sugar Frosted Fruity Cocoa Bunnies - 1 half-cup skim milk - Diet-Fluffy Marshmallow garnish (to taste)	HEART LOVERS' CHEESE-NIPS CASSEROLE Ingredients: - 2 boxes Lo-fat Nabisco Cheese Nips - 3 pounds (lo-carb) hamburger meat - Paprika	LOW-CARB TURPORKY SURPRISE Ingredients: - 1 turkey - 1 pig - 1 oz. Cool Whip Lite - Dessert: 2 Certs
WED.	HEALTH-NUTTY WONDER WAFFLES Ingredients: - 1 box Kellogg's Eggo Ultra-mini Waffles - 1 bottle sugar-free strawberry syrup with Splenda®	MEXICAN PIZZA LITE Ingredients: - 1 Taco Bell Mexican Pizza - 1 packet "hot sauce" - 1 scoop non-fat Tofuroni	LET'S BE FRANKS Ingredients: - 2 cans SpaghettiOs Sliced Franks - 1 cup Campbell's Low Sodium Cream of Mushroom Soup - One box low-sodium franks (for flavor)
THURS.	JURGENS HI-FIBER MUESLI BARS Ingredients: - One box Kellogg's Mueslix - peanut butter - Sweet'N Low (powdered)	FRUIT SALAD Ingredients: - 1 box Sugar-Free Lemon-Lime Jell-O- xxx - 1 cup sugar-free strawberry cream cheese - Raisins	CHICKEN KIEV Ingredients: - Chicken - City of Kiev

the weekly Standard
April 25, 2005

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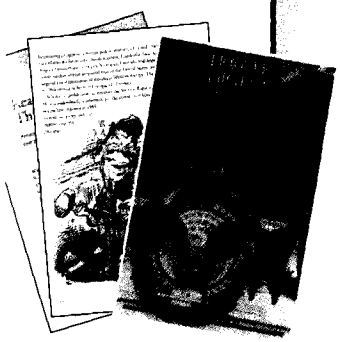
Environmental False Alarms

HOOVER DIGEST
RESEARCH AND OPINION ON PUBLIC POLICY



FREE ISSUE

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Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

In his new book, *Collapse,* Jared Diamond begins with a chapter on my home state of Montana. Although painting a romantic picture of "Big Sky Country," he decries environmental tragedies including toxic mining waste, forest fires, soil exhaustion, water shortages, and invasive species.

Diamond blames these environmental perils on miners, loggers, and farmers who "behaved as they did because the government required almost nothing of them" and because they were businesspeople maximizing profits.

Reading his gloom and doom chapter, one wonders why Ted Turner, Charles Schwab, and friends are buying land in Montana. The reason is that Montana's environment is not as trashed as alarmist Diamond would have us believe.

Here are the facts about Montana. You can drink from almost any stream without concern for toxic wastes, though you might worry about giardia from burgeoning elk herds. You can view millions of acres of spectacular forests—many on private lands. Farms remain productive, and lands mined at the turn of the century are being reclaimed. In short, **Montana's environment is getting better, not worse.**

The same holds generally in the developed world. From 1970 to 2000, for example, concentrations of carbon monoxide fell by 75 percent in the United States and by 95 percent in the United Kingdom. From 1975 to 2000, nitrogen oxides declined by 35 percent in the United States and by 40 percent in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, we in the United States are actually sequestering as much carbon through improved agricultural techniques, healthy forests, and sealed landfills as we are adding to the atmosphere's greenhouse gases.

Why is this so? First, as incomes rise, people demand and can afford a healthier environment. Study after study confirms that "wealthier is healthier."

Second, societies with a strong rule of law, private property rights, and market systems have better environments than those that do not. As more countries have adopted these institutions following the fall of the Iron Curtain, incomes and environmental quality have improved.

Diamond has it backward when he blames environmental problems on a lack of government regulation and too much private enterprise. On Montana's frontier, cattlemen formed voluntary associations to prevent overgrazing of the range. Farmers developed water rights to efficiently allocate water. In addition, mining companies compensated landowners if the companies' pollution spilled across their boundaries.

New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof likens environmentalist false alarms to car alarms that become "just an irritating background noise." It is time to turn off the alarms and recognize that our economic and environmental futures will be brighter if we rely more on private property and markets than on governmental regulations.

—Terry L. Anderson

Terry L. Anderson is the John and Jean DeNault Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution and the executive director of PERC—the Property and Environment Research Center located in Bozeman, Montana.

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